

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 03.15.19 – 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 (34-12-0-3, 105 pts.)**

**@BhamBlazers**

The Bellingham Blazers need to pick up a single point in any form this weekend against Seattle in order to clinch their first Northwest Division title in franchise history.

The Blazers dropped two of three games against the Long Beach Bombers in their most recent series during the first weekend of March. They will need to bring their best this week against a Seattle team that has played them tough throughout the year.

"We are preparing for this weekend like any other," said Blazers Head Coach Mark Collins. "We are putting in the work this week at practice, and hopefully will carry that into the games. I'm sure getting another look at the Totems before the playoffs is important, but we just try to control what we can control and not worry about the rest."

Perhaps the most important benefit of clinching the first seed in the division is the first-round matchup against West Sound that comes along with it.

Bellingham has thoroughly dominated West Sound this season, winning all 15 matchups against the Admirals. Third-seeded Southern Oregon, on the other hand, has logged two straight wins over the Blazers.

Five of Bellingham's top six scorers are 1998 birth years playing in their final WSHL postseason, including Timothy Prexler (39-78-117), Thomas Steven (51-31-82), and Robbie Eichelberger (19-59-78). The veteran-led Blazers will have plenty of motivation for a deep playoff run.

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (32-14-1-2, 100 pts)**

**@SeattleJrTotems**

Last weekend's three-game sweep of West Sound positioned the Seattle Totems to potentially upset Bellingham for the division title over the final two games of the regular season if they post a pair of regulation wins over the Blazers.

The Totems out-scored the Admirals 34-7, including a pair of blowout victories on the road, and have now posted eight straight wins over West Sound.

Seattle trails Bellingham by five points in the Northwest Division standings, and the WSHL's new point format that awards three points for a regulation win gives the Totems a shot at their first division title since the franchise played in the Northern Pacific Hockey League.

"We are excited that with two games to go in the regular season, all our goals for this year are still attainable," said Seattle Head Coach Michael Murphy.

"Bellingham is a quality team in the WSHL, and we have had many close games with them, so I'm sure this weekend will be more of the same."

"It would mean a lot to capture a banner as it's been since back in our days in the NPHL that the Totems finished first in a division."

Forward Michael Shippee (33-64-97) needs just three points in order to hit the 100-point milestone for the first time. The Seattle native and longtime Totem is putting the finishing touches on what's been a fantastic three-year WSHL career.

"Michael Shippee has really blossomed the last three years," said Murphy. "He's definitely one of the most talented offensive players to wear the green and white. I think it would be a huge accomplishment if he could hit the 100-point mark this year."

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (18-29-2-2, 60 pts.)**

**@wshlspartans**

Although they won't be considered the favorite in any playoff series this year, the Southern Oregon Spartans seem to be playing some of their best hockey of the year at the right time.

Outside of last weekend's series against the Ontario Avalanche in which the Spartans lost two of three games, Southern Oregon has been playing well since earning a pair of hard-fought wins over Bellingham in mid-February.

Any potential run to the Thorne Cup tournament will almost certainly require the Spartans to take on both Bellingham and Seattle, no matter how the final standings shape up after this weekend.

Spartans Head Coach Ken Hoey knows the path his club needs to take to make some noise in the playoffs and represent the Northwest Division in the Thorne Cup tournament in Ogden.

"A few keys to our games will be capitalizing on our chances and playing solid defense," Hoey said. "In the last three games against Seattle, we've put up roughly 100 shots on goal. We have to solve [Totems netminder] Rustam Kulizade.

"We have no problem playing Bellingham or Seattle in the first round. We know that we have to go through both of them and are excited for the work ahead of us."

The Spartans will begin the postseason on the road in a best-of-three division semifinal series against Seattle or Bellingham from March 22-24.

**WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (7-42-2-0, 25 pts.)**

@wsadmirals

A tough inaugural regular season came to an end for the West Sound Admirals last weekend when they dropped three games against Seattle.

The Ads have dropped 15 in a row after losing talent at the trade deadline. As the fourth seed, West Sound will be tasked with the regular season division champion in the first round of the playoffs, meaning it will take on either Bellingham or Seattle, depending on the results of this weekend's games.

Because the Northwest Division features only four teams, the Admirals will avoid a play-in series this weekend and automatically qualify for the division semi-finals.

Defenseman Randy Yeakley doubled his goal output on the season last Friday night against Seattle, finding the back of the net twice.

Yeakley, 19, has a 4-12-16 scoring line on the year and was able to snap a seven-game scoring drought. He had another multi-point effort on February 16 against Southern Oregon when he netted a goal and dished out an assist.

*--Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*