

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.28.17 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (4-14-0, 8pts)
WSHLDallasSnipers.pointstreaksites.com
@DallasSnipers

The Dallas Snipers, riding a nine-game losing streak, had Thanksgiving week off leading up to this week's bye, meaning they'll have just three more games before the Western States Shootout.

Those three games are against the Wichita Jr. Thunder, which Dallas defeated in three straight games for their most recent wins.

Dallas is getting some decent goaltending, most notably Manny Legace who leads the team in the crease and is sporting a respectable .851 SV% on a team that is 10 games below .500.

American Sterling Cooper (12-15-27) has been a leader all season, and his 12 goals lead the Snipers.

Head Coach Aaron Davis, like many coaches in the WSHL this season, is still waiting for his team to play a full 60 minutes.

"The light will turn on when we learn how to play 60 minutes," Davis said. "I know we have a young team and it takes understanding and time. Once we learn how to play a complete game we will be in much better shape."

They could also use some work on their powerplay where the Snipers sit at 18%, scoring only 17 times while also allowing 6 shorthanded goals to opponents.

They'll take on Wichita in two weeks, which gives them a nice shot at honing their skills before the trip to the desert.

EL PASO RHINOS (21-0-0, 42pts)

www.ElPasoRhinos.com

@El_Paso_Rhinos

The El Paso Rhinos swept a Springfield team that is working hard to stay in the Mid-Western Division race. The three-game sweep gives the Rhinos 21 victories, good for tops in the WSHL, while also remaining one of only three undefeated teams left in the league.

One of the other undefeated teams sits directly below El Paso in the division standings as Oklahoma City remains undefeated (18-0-0), but still six points behind the Rhinos in the standings.

Coach Cory Herman continues preaching that his team needs to play hard for a full game to get where they need to be.

"Right now, we need to work on consistency, Herman said. "We need to play 60 solid minutes per game and right now we aren't."

This is a song that coach Herman has been singing most of the season, and with OKC on the docket in two weeks, this weekend's series against the Western Division's Phoenix Knights will be a good time to get the practice of playing a full 60.

After posting 59 saves over the three games, goaltender Filip Krasanovsky (1.41/.934) now leads the league with 17 wins – five more than the second player on the list. Krasanovsky also leads the WSHL in minutes played (1,024).

Chaseton Sare's 3-2-5 against Springfield gives him a 20-28-48 line, good for the second-most points in the division.

El Paso needs to be leery of letting a loss slip in this weekend when they travel to Arizona to take on a not-horrible Phoenix squad. With 1,033 PIMs between these two teams, there's sure to be some fireworks.

But, if El Paso can make a clean getaway out of Arizona, their series against OKC will be one many in the WSHL will be watching.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (18-0-0, 36pts)

www.OKCityHockey.com

[@OKCBlazersWSHL](https://twitter.com/OKCBlazersWSHL)

The Blazers took it to Wichita this past weekend, winning all three games by a total of 42-2, bringing them to 18 wins to open the year. OKC is now one of three undefeated teams left in the WSHL, but their only opponent thus far with a winning record has been Superior (12-11-0). Those three games against the Mountain Division's RoughRiders were the three closest contests the Blazers have been involved in this season.

Aside from Superior, OKC's opponents' combined record right now is 7-54-0. The Blazers are currently scoring at a gaudy and league-leading 10.2 goals/game while allowing only 1.2.

Ivan Bondarenko leads the division with a 26-33-59 line, with Josh Chamberlain (20-25-45), Griffin Wienczek (14-30-44), and Patrick Tondi (17-18-35) rounding out the division's top-5 in scoring.

Things are about to get more challenging for the Blazers, however, as they will face off with Mid-Western Division rival Springfield this weekend, then follow that up with El Paso. A challenging docket will no doubt be awaiting them in Las Vegas at the league showcase as well.

El Paso will also be playing with something to prove, and OKC will have to be at their best to win.

It will be a series to watch to be sure, but in the meantime, the Blazers need to make sure they don't look past the Express this weekend.

Beating Springfield will show they can play against tougher competition, but we'll all be watching in two weeks when they play El Paso to see who the real big dog in the division is.

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS (11-8-2, 24pts)

www.SpringfieldExpress.com

@_ExpressHockey

The Express got rolled by El Paso in a series they were hoping to use as proof they belong in the conversation within the Mid-Western Division.

It was the second three-game sweep at the hands of the Rhinos in three weeks for Springfield, and they may just be who they are at this point. That is to say, they are the clear #3 team in a division with two of the league's undefeated teams.

The Express fought hard in Friday's game, with Akos Szigeti scoring a goal and an assist as Springfield found themselves tied with the undefeated Rhinos heading into the third period. But a three-goal third put El Paso ahead for good and, after scoring first in Saturday's game, the Express allowed six straight for the 6-1 loss.

A brawl near the top of Saturday's second period saw eight total players go to the box, and the teams combined for 64 total PIMs in the game.

Allowing another three straight goals against in the third period Sunday, meant the Express ended the weekend being outscored 10-7 in the first two periods, while being shutout 9-0 in the third over the three games.

Nikita Sokov's 17-20-37 leads Springfield, and he also leads the team in PIMs with 61 so far. The veteran Sokov is on his way to his best season in four years in the WSHL.

The Express will face off with the other team in the Mid-Western Division, Oklahoma City, for six games before they head to Vegas. With a bye week in between series with the Blazers, Springfield will have time to really work on making a dent in the division where they could otherwise be stuck in the middle.

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (1-20-0, 2pts)

www.WichitaJuniorThunder.com

@JrThunderHockey

Wichita was swept again, this time at the hands of OKC, who have beaten the Jr. Thunder six times this season.

Braedon Thomas and Hunter Litman scored on Sunday to give Wichita their only strikes on the weekend. Matt Allen, Trevor Minard, and Litman added assists.

The Toronto-born Litman played his first two games with Wichita this weekend, and may provide the spark that Wichita needs, having won only one game in their first 21 this season.

The Jr. Thunder are playing shorthanded this season after winning the Thorne Cup last year and are now a team filled with younger players playing against veteran competition within the division. While it may lead to some drastic growing pains, this is a team that could find their groove in the second half given their youth and skill.

That youth may be getting in their way right now. Though, it can pay off, with 16-year old Braeden Thomas leading the team with a 6-2-8 line.

They'll take on Dallas this weekend in an attempt to close the space between themselves and the Snipers.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media