

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.7.17 – NORTHWEST DIVISION



**BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (7-12-3, 17 pts)**  
[www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com](http://www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com)  
**@Bhamblazers**

It was an up-and-down weekend for the Bellingham Blazers, who dropped a road game against West Sound 8-5 on Saturday night before bouncing back with a 5-4 triumph in Seattle the next day.

In the Seattle game, the Totems tied things up late and sent it to overtime, where forward Jamahl Eackett redirected a shot into the Seattle net to complete his third hat trick of the season and give his team the win.

Throughout what has been an inconsistent showing from the Blazers this season, one thing is for sure: Bellingham's offense has been steadily improving.

The offensive revival has been led by four double-digit goal-scorers: Ruslan Novruzov (19-18-37), Ilya Abubakirov (17-17-34), Eackett (16-12-28), and

Thomas Steven (10-14-24), who netted his 10th goal of the season in the win over Seattle.

The Blazers have shown an ability to rebound from poor offensive showings. Since scoring eight goals over the course of a three-game series against Tahoe a few weeks ago, Bellingham has poured in 17 goals over its last three contests.

On the year, the Blazers have scored 100 goals over 22 outings, which is around four-and-a-half goals per contest. That's not a bad mark by any means, but it is slightly low compared to the upper half of the league.

This week marks the final live game action the Blazers will see until the Western States Shootout. Bellingham will take on West Sound in a home-and-home series beginning this Friday at Bellingham Sportsplex.

The Blazers won their first two matchups against the Warriors but have fallen the last two times the clubs have met.

### **IDAHO ICECATS (16-2-0, 32 pts)**

[www.idahoicecats.com](http://www.idahoicecats.com)

The Idaho IceCats experienced defeat for the first time this season, dropping two of three games to an Ogden club that is currently residing in second place in the WSHL with 43 points.

The IceCats could not hold onto a 2-0 lead in the third period of the opening contest, ultimately falling by a 4-2 final. They rebounded for a 5-4 overtime win the following evening in what was one of the best games the league has seen this year.

Ogden took the lead on three separate occasions, including a two-goal advantage, but Idaho fought back to tie things up each time. The game ended when defenseman Jackson York (4-7-11) fired the puck past Ogden netminder Daniel Pavlicko during the extra period to give the IceCats arguably their biggest win of the year.

Idaho dropped the rubber match in another exciting game by a score of 5-4, its second loss of the season and its first series loss.

The IceCats will take on Southern Oregon at home this weekend in a three-game set before traveling to Tahoe for their final series before the WSHL Showcase.

Former Idaho Junior Steelhead Johnny DeRoche recently earned an NCAA Division I scholarship at the University of Vermont.

DeRoche, 19, appeared in nine regular-season games with Idaho last season, scoring 16 points (9-7-16). He added an 8-5-13 scoring line over eight postseason games as he helped the Junior Steelheads come within one goal of a Thorne Cup championship and was named to the WSHL Playoff All-Star Team.

"Johnny DeRoche is not only an extremely gifted player, but also an outstanding young man," said Idaho General Manager and Head Coach John Olver. "We are pleased to see that Vermont has recognized his talents and abilities.

"Having a former Junior Steelheads player receive an NCAA Division I scholarship is a testament to the caliber of play in the Western States Hockey League."

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (7-10-3, 17 pts)**

[www.SeattleJrTotems.com](http://www.SeattleJrTotems.com)

**@SeattleJrTotems**

The Seattle Totems' downward spiral continued as the club dropped both of its games last weekend to West Sound and Bellingham.

Seattle has lost 12 of its last 13 and now shares fourth place in the division with Bellingham, though it has two games in hand on the Blazers.

To put it simply, the Totems have not been able to score enough goals to win. Their 64 goals are the third-least in the league, fewer than struggling teams like Dallas, Casper, and Phoenix.

Other than leading scorers Michael Shippee (12-26-38) and Tom Ignatovich (21-13-34), Seattle has just two players with double-digit points in forward Mitch Hunt (8-8-16) and Tyler Glocan (4-7-11).

The lack of offensive depth has put a huge burden on Shippee and Ignatovich, whom the Totems count on for most of their scoring. The duo has combined for more than half of Seattle's goals on the season.

Seattle's only game this weekend will take place on Saturday night at home against West Sound. Three of the Totems' wins have come against the Warriors, and the two teams have already played on eight separate occasions.

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (3-21-0, 6 pts)**

[www.SOSpartans.com](http://www.SOSpartans.com)

[@wshlspartans](#)

Following last week's bye, the Southern Oregon Spartans are back this weekend with a three-game series against division-leading Idaho.

After that, the Spartans will take on Seattle in a two-gamer before making the trip to Vegas for the WSHL Showcase.

Southern Oregon is set to take on Cheyenne, Wichita, and San Diego over the course of the three-day event. Those three clubs own a combined record of 4-62-1, meaning the Spartans have almost as many wins as all three put together. Claiming three victories in front of numerous scouts in Vegas is a distinct possibility for Southern Oregon.

Looking ahead, the Spartans will not open up their second-half schedule until January 19, when they kick off an eight-game homestand with the first of three consecutive dates against West Sound.

The homestand, Southern Oregon's longest of the season, will also see the Spartans welcome Idaho and Seattle to Southern Oregon Ice.

Overall, 14 of Southern Oregon's 19 second-half games will take place at home, which will hopefully allow the Spartans to pick up some points behind the support of their fans.

### **TAHOE ICEMEN (13-11-3, 29 pts)**

[www.Tahoelcemen.com](http://www.Tahoelcemen.com)

[@Tahoelcemen](#)

The Tahoe Icemen fell closer to the .500 mark last weekend in a three-game series sweep at the hands of the red-hot Utah Outliers.

None of the games was particularly close as the Icemen seemed to be overmatched against one of the best teams in the stacked Mountain Division.

One of the biggest factors in Tahoe's overall early-season success has been its abundance of games. The Icemen have already played a staggering 27 games, nine more than Idaho and three more than West Sound and Southern Oregon, who are the next closest in the division with 24 games played apiece.

As other clubs catch up in the games played department, Tahoe's lead in the division has been slowly slipping away, though it is still holding a three-point lead over third-place West Sound.

The Icemen have enjoyed solid play between the pipes this season thanks to the duo of Wade Conlan and Thomas Spero.

Conlan is in his second year with Tahoe and has shown improvement after a 4.97/.889 slash line over 22 appearances last season. The Bethany, Connecticut, native has battled his way to a 3.69/.912 line this year while facing a heavy workload of 556 shots, the fifth-most of any WSHL goaltender.

Conlan, 20, has started the majority of the Icemen's games and owns a 7-7-0 record.

Meanwhile, Spero is thriving in a backup role with a 3.45 goals-against average to go along with his .909 save percentage. The 18-year-old is in his first season of junior hockey and could potentially become a staple in the Tahoe net after Conlan moves onto the next step in his career.

The Icemen are off this weekend, giving them some extra practice time to prepare for a three-game set December 14-16 against an Idaho squad that finally showed signs of vulnerability last week.

### **WEST SOUND WARRIORS (13-11-0, 26 pts)**

[www.WestSoundWarriors.com](http://www.WestSoundWarriors.com)

**@WS\_Warriors**

The West Sound Warriors kept up their winning ways last weekend with a pair of victories over Seattle and Bellingham.

Over the past several weeks, the Warriors have been seemingly scoring at will. That theme continued as West Sound netted a combined 17 goals in its two games last weekend.

Over the course of their last seven contests, the Warriors have scored an average of seven goals per game. That output has boosted their overall goal differential into a positive number for the first time since the beginning of the season.

West Sound has built plenty of momentum lately with four wins in a row and victories in eight of its last nine games.

The Warriors seem to have a great chance at finishing as a top-two seed in the division at the conclusion of the first half, especially considering that Tahoe still has to play three games against powerhouse Idaho before the Western States Shootout.

"From day one, we wanted to finish in the top at the end of the first half in order to have some momentum going in the second half," said Warriors Head Coach Ty Smith. "I think we are finally clicking in a sense of playing to our strengths, but we need to continue to get better day in and day out."

Smith does not want his club to look into the future, as he added, "The biggest thing is not thinking too far ahead. We have some tough games coming up against Bellingham and Seattle to close the first half up."

The Warriors are scheduled to play a pair of games against Bellingham on Friday and Sunday sandwiched around a Saturday night matchup against Seattle. A weekend sweep could vault West Sound ahead of Tahoe in the division standings.

*--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*