

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.09.17 – NORTHWEST DIVISION



BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (5-5-3, 13 pts)

www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com

@Bhamblazers

Another solid series has pulled the Bellingham Blazers back to .500 and put them all alone in fourth place in the Northwest Division.

The Blazers earned five of six possible points against Southern Oregon last weekend, but Bellingham likely feels as though the series should have been a sweep. It was ahead by two goals late in the third period in the opening game before the Spartans rallied to tie it and eventually won in overtime.

"I certainly think we took a step in the right direction last weekend," said Blazers Head Coach Mark Collins. "It took us losing another lead on Friday night for us to realize that. We have blown so many games this year, and I think the team finally understands what it takes to win."

Now, Collins and his club will prepare for a three-game set on the road against Fresno beginning this Thursday night.

"We lost our captain and what was our leading goal-scorer a couple of weeks ago due to injury, and it's been tough to fill those holes," he said. "I think this weekend versus Fresno will be a tough series. They are a well-coached team and obviously a more veteran team."

Nevertheless, the goal this weekend is of course a sweep, which could potentially vault the Blazers to within one point of the top spot in the division.

No matter what happens against Fresno, Collins has set a goal for his club for the remainder of the second half.

"Ideally, I would like to get into the top three in the division before the shuffling begins for the Showcase in Vegas. Hopefully, we can do things the right way for the next couple weeks to make sure that happens."

IDAHO ICECATS (9-0-0, 18 pts)

www.idahoicecats.com

The Idaho IceCats are probably sick of time off. The IceCats, who were the last team in the WSHL to open their season, had another bye last week.

To their credit, the IceCats did not let the week off go to waste. Players volunteered with The Salvation Army at a coat drive the day before Halloween.

Idaho is back in action this weekend as it travels to Seattle for a three-game set against the Totems, who seem to be cooling down after a hot start.

Forward Lance Herning will look to continue his dominant start to the season. Herning (14-9-23), the IceCats' leading scorer, has registered at least one point in all seven of his appearances, including a pair of five-point games and a four-goal outing.

Herning is seven points shy of hitting the career 100-point mark for the regular season. Considering the rate at which he's scoring, that milestone could be wrapped up by the second game of the Seattle series this weekend.

Idaho's special teams play has been nothing short of outstanding. With a fourth-ranked power play operating at a 27.9 percent clip and the third-best

penalty kill in the league at 93.3 percent, the IceCats have been demoralizing their opponents almost every time a referee raises his arm for a penalty call.

SEATTLE TOTEMS (6-4-2, 14 pts)

www.SeattleJrTotems.com

@SeattleJrTotems

Things could have gone better last weekend for the Seattle Totems, who dropped a pair of games to West Sound, a club that has spent most of its first season in the WSHL near the bottom of the Northwest Division.

Seattle was competitive in the first game, despite the seemingly lopsided 6-2 final. The Totes rallied from an early two-goal deficit to tie the game, but the Warriors tacked on another goal late in the second period to claim a lead they would not relinquish.

The Totems fought hard in the second game and made it all the way to overtime, but West Sound snuck one past Naoki Onodera during the extra period to give the Warriors another win.

Seattle is in control of third place, but Bellingham is just one point back while West Sound now trails by only two points.

In fact, the middle of the Northwest Division figures to be a fierce battle all season long. At this rate, the Totems could finish in fifth place just as easily as they could end the season as a top-two seed because of how competitive intra-division play has been.

The Totems will need to bring their "A" game this weekend as they welcome Idaho to Olympicview Arena for a three-game set.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (2-13-0, 4 pts)

www.SOSpartans.com

@wshlspartans

While the rest of the division has enjoyed a resurgence, the Southern Oregon Spartans seem to have fallen behind the pack.

The Spartans did manage their second victory of the season last weekend against Bellingham, but the other two games in the series did not go as well. Southern Oregon allowed 15 goals over the course of the final pair of games.

To be fair, the Spartans' schedule has been quite difficult, with series against Mountain Division foes Ogden and Utah, a pair of perennial contenders that are both top-five teams in the league standings.

Southern Oregon's brutal stretch is not over yet. After playing Utah at home this weekend, it will be tasked with an undefeated Idaho club on the road next week.

The Spartans need to keep giving it their all every game and live with the results. They are more talented than their record shows. Things will get easier soon, but positive results will be difficult to come by for the time being.

TAHOE ICEMEN (9-7-2, 20 pts)

www.Tahoelcemen.com

@Tahoelcemen

The division-leading Tahoe Icemen did not get the results they were looking for last weekend as they were swept by Ogden.

Tahoe kept things close early on with a pair of two-goal contests in the first two games of the series, but it ran out of steam in the third and final game as Ogden won, 7-2.

The Icemen defense took a huge step back against the Mustangs, allowing a total of 19 goals over three games. Before the series, Tahoe was giving up an average of about 3.6 goals per game. Now, that average sits at 4.1 goals.

As a team, the Icemen have lit the lamp a division-best 83 times. On the other side of things, the club has allowed 74 goals. Only Southern Oregon has allowed more in the Northwest Division.

Tahoe's outstanding play at home has kept it at the top of the division. Its 7-1-1 record at South Lake Tahoe Arena looks amazing compared with its paltry 2-6-1 mark on the road.

This weekend, the Icemen will take on West Sound at home in a three-game series. It will be the first meeting ever between the two clubs.

WEST SOUND WARRIORS (6-8-0, 12 pts)

www.WestSoundWarriors.com

@WS_Warriors

After a two-game sweep of Seattle last weekend, the West Sound Warriors are inching their way back to the .500 mark.

The Warriors have had the Totems' number thus far. West Sound has defeated Seattle in three of four meetings this year. Series like these don't seem to mean much now, but they can impact seeding in a huge way come playoff time.

The wins over Seattle were a nice way to rebound from a rough pair of losses against Bellingham a couple of weeks ago that dropped the Warriors to four games below .500.

This weekend, West Sound will get a chance to prove it can still be a contender in the division as it takes on Tahoe in a three-game series.

West Sound's upcoming schedule will give it an opportunity to make a move in the division standings. After the Tahoe series, the Warriors will play their next 13 games against Bellingham, Seattle, and Southern Oregon.

In the middle of that 13-game stretch, West Sound will play its slate of games at the Las Vegas Showcase, which should give it more chances for wins against clubs of similar skill levels.

All three of those clubs are division rivals that West Sound needs to prove it can defeat on a regular basis if it hopes to be taken seriously as a threat to Tahoe and Idaho at the top of the division.

--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media