

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.14.17 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



CASPER COYOTES (3-11-0, 6pts)

www.caspercoyotes.com

@CasperCoyotes

The Casper Coyotes are in a nine-game losing streak heading into this week's matchup with Mountain Division rivals Ogden. This will be the first of three series this season between the two teams.

Romaeo D'Intino leads the team with a 4-7-11 line and Bradley Green leads the Coyotes with seven goals. Both players are in their first season in the WSHL.

Goaltender Luka Sotlar, also playing his first season in the league, leads the team with a respectable .897 SV%.

After Ogden, Casper plays six games against division rivals Cheyenne in a series between two clubs trying to gain some traction in the Mountain Division standings.

Former Coyote Dominic Naas (11-8-19 in 39 games in 2016) continues tearing it up for McKendree University. The Swiss forward now has a 35-56-91 line in just 41 college games.

Another former Coyote doing well is the franchise's all-time leader in assists and points, Viktor Thim, who put up a 68-109-177 line in 95 games with Casper. He's playing Division 2 professional hockey in his native Sweden and has an 11-15-26 line in his first 11 games.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-15-0, 4pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

Cheyenne Stampede general manager Mark Lantz announced that Neil Breen has assumed the team's head coaching duties.

Breen has a wealth of playing and coaching experience. He began his junior hockey playing career with the Nanaimo Clippers of the BCHL as a 16-year-old, he then moved on to the Omaha Lancers of the USHL where he captained the team and lead them to a Clark Cup Championship. Neil's play for the Lancer's earned him a scholarship to Quinnipiac University where he was again named captain, lead his team into the NCAA playoffs, scored over 100 points and was inducted into the Quinnipiac University Hall of Fame.

After a year of professional hockey in the Central Hockey League, he entered the teaching profession for four years. Coach Breen's love of the game drew him back in and he left teaching to become a fulltime coach in the Eastern Hockey League with the Hartford Junior Wolfpack. From there Neil moved to the NAHL with the Springfield Junior Blues, and on to the Tri-City Storm of the USHL. Most recently Neil was a Head Coach in the Canadian Sports School Hockey League. Coach Breen's successful coaching style is based on developing a combination of skill and work ethic in each and every player in order to help them move to the next level.

The Stampede will be seeing a lot of Mountain Division rivals, Superior and Casper, in the next four weeks, with two series against each team in that span.

Cheyenne being able to pick up a few points out of the possible 22 against the RoughRiders and Coyotes may save them from an entire season in the dumps.

Six of Cheyenne's next 11 games are at home, so it's an opportunity for the team to start building some momentum.

George Leech scored his third goal of the season, and Cheyenne's lone score against OKC this past weekend.

COLORADO EAGLES (14-3-2, 30pts)

www.coloradojunioreagles.com

@COJrEagles

Four different players scored for the Colorado Jr. Eagles in their lone game this past weekend, a 4-2 victory over Mountain Division rivals Superior.

Vincent Mastrandrea (nine goals on the year), David Mitchell (8), Sean McMahon (8), and Cory Richardson (7) each scored against the RoughRiders with Mastrandrea's third period tally proving to be the insurance in the two-goal victory.

Coach Steve Haddon says his team isn't looking at the standings where his team is now tied with two other teams for first place with 30 points apiece.

"We take it one day, one game at a time," Haddon said. "As a group we just want to make sure we're staying the course and growing everyday."

Braden LaJoie continues his strong season with 20 saves against Superior, giving him a .908SV% and tied for 3rd in the league with nine wins all while leading the WSHL in playing time.

The Jr. Eagles are playing a three-game series with the Mid-Western Division's El Paso Rhinos who are currently the lone first-place team in their respective division. This is a big test for Colorado who many (read: me) predicted would be a contender for the Thorne Cup this season.

Against the other two teams in the Mountain sharing first place with Colorado (Ogden & Utah), the Jr. Eagles are 3-2-1.

If Colorado is going to be one of the league's elite teams, they need to beat elite teams, and putting El Paso down will be a great step in that direction.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (15-4-0, 30pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

The Ogden Mustangs find themselves in a three-way tie with Colorado and Utah for first place in the Mountain Division.

Coach Jake Laime says his team isn't worried about the standings. Until they have to be.

"I'm never really concerned with standings until it's reflective of playoff positions," Laime said. "Every day we want to leave the rink better than when we came. That's our mindset."

The Mustangs played a tight series with the Tahoe Icemen of the Northwest Division and will have Casper for a three-game tune-up this weekend before six straight games against teams who currently sit in first place in their respective divisions.

Three games with undefeated Idaho of the Northwest are sandwiched between a one-off and a home-and-home with Utah.

It's going to be a bruising few weeks for Ogden closing out 2017, and coach Laime thinks his team is just about ready.

"We know there are a few holes in our lineup that we hope to strengthen in time," Laime said. "But for the time being, we can only control what we are capable of."

Matus Spodniak's 28-34-62 leads the league and teammates Jacob Laurin (16-31-47) and Ross Bartlett (19-25-44) are third and fourth in the league scoring race.

The team's 148 goals for, and +100 goal differential, are bests in the WSHL by a long shot, but coach Laime would like to see more from his team.

"We desire to be a stronger team off the puck and difficult to play against in all three zones," he said.

SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS (10-10-0, 20pts)

www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com

@SPR_RoughRiders

The Superior RoughRiders dropped their lone game of the week against Colorado this past weekend to fall to .500 on the year. Marshall Murphy made 31 saves in the loss and Avery Albert and Thore Weyrauch scored for the RoughRiders.

Rookie Nikita Sheberov's assist over the weekend brought his season line to 23-16-39 to lead the team in goals and points. Thore Weyrauch's goal and assist brought him up to 11-18-29, good for second on the team in points and the team lead in assists.

The RoughRiders have been up and down all season – as their record can attest – and coach Paul DePuydt is looking for consistency heading to the mid-point of the season.

"I think we need to compete as a team for 60 minutes of every game," coach DePuydt said. "We know the Mountain Division opponents present a very tough challenge every game, so we must stay sharp at all times and can't take anything for granted."

Superior has played in eight two-goal games this season, and with the rest of their schedule being against fellow Mountain Division teams, it could be a tight go from here on out.

"We need to be more diligent on our penalty kill, as well as our power play," DePuydt said of where his team can

improve. "Special teams can make or break a team, especially when you get in one-goal games."

Superior's next 10 games are all against either Colorado and Cheyenne. Outside of the Western States Shootout in Las Vegas the week before Christmas, those are the only two teams they will face until they travel to Utah to play the Outliers January 19-21.

Sneaking a few points away from the Jr. Eagles could get the RoughRiders in a good position to make waves in 2018.

UTAH OUTLIERS (15-4-0, 30pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

Utah Outliers goaltender Dawson Rodin's .950 SV% leads the league among qualified goalies (at least six games played), and his 1.51 goals-against average is good for second in the league. Crease partner Otto Saxin has a 0.54/.967 slash in five games. That makes them statistically the best goaltending tandem in the WSHL, leading the league with just 31 goals allowed in 19 games. That's a 1.63 team GAA.

Rodin (17 saves on Friday) and Saxin (19 on Saturday) each won 4-0 shutouts this weekend against the Northwest Division's Southern Oregon Spartans. Trenton Wendt made 19 saves in his 9-2 victory Sunday.

Twelve skaters scored Utah's 17 goals over the weekend with Zack Hoffman scoring two on Friday and Gianni Vitali scoring three over the weekend with two on Sunday.

Three Outliers have 10+ goals on the season, led by defenseman Hoffman's 12 who also leads the team in assists

and points with a 12-19-31 line in his first WSHL season. Hoffman is the top point-producing blue liner in the WSHL.

Utah will have one game with Ogden in two weeks before playing a series with the Northwest Division's Tahoe Icemen.

After that, it's a big home-and-home with Ogden to close out the 2017 portion of their schedule. Currently sharing first place in the division with Colorado and Ogden, Utah will have plenty of time to clear things up between now and the new year. With the way the Outliers are playing in net and how their new faces are playing, it could be a surprising finish for the Mountain Division.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media