

Friday, October 6th, 2017

Kelowna Rockets (2-1-0-1) vs. Prince George Cougars (2-3-0-0)

KELOWNA ROCKETS

Record: 2-1-0-1 **Home:** 1-1-0-1 **Away:** 1-0-0-0

PP: 4-20 (20%) **PK:** 15-20 (75%)

GF-GA: 17-15

Ranking: 2nd BC Division 3rd Western Conference

PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS

Record: 2-3-0-0 **Home:** 0-2-0-0 **Away:** 2-1-0-0

PP: 5-24 (20.8 %) **PK:** 16-19 (84.2%)

GF-GA: 13-16

Ranking: 3rd BC Division 6th Western Conference

HOME COOKING: After winning two of three on their road trip through Seattle, Portland and Kamloops, the Prince George Cougars return home, kicking-off a five-game home stand against their BC Division rival, the Kelowna Rockets. After opening the road trip with a loss in Seattle, the Cougars rebounded nicely, shutting out the Portland Winterhawks 3-0 on October 1st, and they thumped the Kamloops Blazers 6-2 Wednesday night. Prince George is still in search of their first win at home, as they dropped both games to the Spokane Chiefs on opening weekend two weeks ago. Last year the Cougars won 22 of their 36 home games, sporting a 22-10-1-3 record at the CN Centre. On this five-game home stand, the Cougars will face the Rockets (2), Blazers (2) and Calgary Hitmen.

COUGARS-ROCKETS: Tonight, is the first of eight between these two divisional foes. Last year they split the eight-game season series, as each team picked up four wins. It was tale of two halves to the season series, as the Cougars won the first four games over Kelowna, outscoring them 13-4. However, Kelowna won the last four games against the Cougars outscoring them 18-6; only two of the eight games were decided by one goal. Of those returning Cougars, **Jared Bethune** had the most goals and points against Kelowna, scoring four times and finishing with eight points in as many games. **Josh Curtis** was second with four points, all assists. Prince George split their four games against Kelowna last season.

COUGARS TRIM ROSTER: The Cougars made one roster move ahead of their weekend series against Kelowna, as they re-assigned defenseman **Peter Kope** to the Camrose Kodiaks in the Alberta Junior Hockey League. **Kope**, a fifth round WHL Bantam Draft pick in 2014, had seven penalty-minutes in three pre-season games for the Cougars. Currently the Prince George Cougars roster sits at 26 players: 15 forwards, 8 defencemen and three goaltenders. Among those 26 players, four are in their 20-year-old season, seven are in their 19-year-old season, five are in their 18-year-old season, nine are in their 17-year-old season and one is in their 16-year-old season. 14 of the 26 players on the roster were drafted by the Cougars in the WHL Bantam Draft, five players were acquired via trade, and eight were players added via the Cougars 50-man Protected List as free-agents.

JA'CKSON LEPPARD RANKED BY CENTRAL SCOUTING: NHL Central Scouting published its September Players to Watch List and the Cougars' **Jackson Leppard** is rated as a 'C' prospect; he's projected as a fourth to sixth round NHL draft pick. The 17-year-old **Leppard** has a goal and an assist in four games this season to go along with an even plus / minus rating. In 35 games as year as a 16-year-old, the North Vancouver, BC, product had a pair of goals and four points. **Leppard** was selected by the Cougars in the first round (8th overall) in the 2015 WHL Bantam Draft. He appeared in two games as an under-ager during the 2015-16 season and joined the team full-time in 2016-17. 27 WHL players were named to the NHL Central Scouting List. Spokane's Ty Smith was the only WHL'er assigned an 'A' rating. Five were given 'B' ratings and 21

UPCOMING GAMES:

KELOWNA ROCKETS AT PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS (SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7TH)

CALGARY HITMEN AT PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS (TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH)

KAMLOOPS BLAZERS AT PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS (FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13TH)

others, including Leppard, were rated as 'C' prospects. The 'A' rating indicates a first round candidate, a 'B' rating indicates a second or third round candidate, and a 'C' rating indicates a fourth, fifth, or sixth round candidate.

TAVIN GRANT WHL GOALIE OF THE WEEK: The Western Hockey League announced Monday that Cougars goaltender Tavin Grant has been named the WHL Goaltender of the for the week ending October 2, 2017. Grant, a product of Burnaby, B.C., put together a dazzling 47-save shutout of the Portland Winterhawks Sunday, delivering the Cougars their first victory of the season in the form of a 3-0 triumph. The netminder stopped 12 shots in each of the first two periods and made 23 more in the final period to hand the Winterhawks their first loss of the season, picking up his first career WHL shutout in the process. He followed that up by stopping 17 of 19 shots Wednesday against Kamloops for his second consecutive win. In three starts this year, Grant owns a 2-1 record, sporting a 2.02 goals-against average and a .938 save percentage. Grant ranks seventh in goals-against average and sixth in save percentage in the WHL.

THREE PROSPECTS AT 2017 WHL CUP: The WHL announced the rosters for the rebranded 2017 WHL Cup Wednesday morning, and the Cougars are represented by three prospects. Forward **Tyson Phare** will play on Team BC, and forwards **Stanley Cooley** and **Boston Maxwell** will play on Team Saskatchewan. **Phare** was the Cougars' first round pick, 18th overall, in the 2017 WHL Bantam Draft. Cooley was selected in the third round, 62nd overall, and Maxwell was picked in the 4th round, 84th overall. Previously known as the Western Canada U16 Challenge Cup, the tournament features the highest-rated players in the under-16 age category from the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The tournament will take place from Wednesday, October 18 through Sunday, October 22 in Calgary.

PAYING IMMEDIATE DIVIDENDS: **Dennis Cholowski** returned to the Cougars from the Detroit Red Wings last Friday and he's made an immediate impact. The 19-year-old defenseman has a goal and five points in his first three games. **Cholowski** scored his first WHL goal Friday in Seattle, then added four assists in the last two games. **Cholowski** was returned to Prince George by the Red Wings last week after playing four pre-season games with the Detroit, where he picked up an assist and averaged 19-minutes of ice time.

NEW FACES, IN NEW PLACES: The Cougars will have 12 rookies on their current roster. Of those dozen, there's some familiar names who have suited up for games with the Cougars in the past. On the blue-line, **Jonas Harkins** and **Cole Moberg** both played in regular season games last season. **Moberg** scored his first WHL goal on the road against the Vancouver Giants back on November 10th, of last year. **Max Kryski** also suited up for two regular season games a season ago for PG. **Ethan O'Rourke** and **Tavin Grant** are a pair of Cougars who are looking to gain full-time status after starting last season with the team. Both finished the season across town with the Spruce Kings in the BCHL, but both are looking to build off an impressive pre-season. 18-year-old **O'Rourke** led the Cougars with four goals and five points in the four-pre-season games. **Grant** yielded just two goals in three appearances, posting a 1.21 goals-against average and a .964 save percentage. It's a three-way battle in the Cougars' crease and **Grant** is looking to solidify the number one job, by caring over his strong pre-season into the games that count.

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