

GAME REPORT

Home: CV Firebirds vs. Away: TEX Stars

Date: Dec 5, 2024 7:00PM PST

Pre-Game

The Stars are halfway through the 6-game road trip, and they are 2 and 1 so far. Having won the last two games against the Firebirds and the Reign. Tonight's game against the Firebirds starts the final 3 games of the road trip as they will finish the last two games in Henderson this weekend. On paper there is no individuals that stand out league wise and team stats have them mostly in the middle of the pack. They are sitting in 3rd in the Central Division, 6 points ahead of the 4th place team. They are playing as a solid team to this point in the season.

The Firebirds have lost their last three games: overtime, shootout, and regulation loss. There are some injuries and call ups that are giving younger players more playing time, which is a good thing in the long run. The lack of experience can pop-up. Two areas that have stood out, but these are team issues and not individual problems. The first is indecisiveness with the puck in the D-zone, which can lead to being trapped or a costly turn over. The second is the power play. The Firebirds are 5 for 54, which is near the bottom of the league. Problems passing the puck down low, zone entry, or repeating the same shot attempt is not working. The season is still young. The Firebirds play competitive, and they get the job done. They are 1 point out of second place in the division, 6th in the conference, and 11th in the AHL.

Head-to-head: Tonight, will be the 2nd of 4 games this season between the two teams, and the last to be in Coachella Valley. Texas won the last game on Saturday in a shootout. Both teams are evenly matched so tonight's game will be interesting to see what changes each team makes to get an edge and end the game in regulation.

1st Period

The Stars owned the period. Their structure was solid and they hustled to win puck battles. The first Stars goal was a point shot that trickled in that came within the first minute of the game. The Firebirds tied the game briefly with a pass from low to the slot that was snipped into the goal, which was also the first shot on goal of the game for the Firebirds. The rest of the period saw the Stars score a goal with a shot from the back of the net off the goalie to go in. The third goal came on a power play. With the Firebirds defense occupied with the player with the puck to the right of the goal, a blind pass to a Stars' player sneaking in from behind on the left.

2nd Period

Something must have been said in the intermission. The Firebirds were clearly the better team in the period. The game was little testy in the first period, and it continued into the 2nd. The Firebirds scored twice on the power play. The structure and patience were the best all season. The first goal was a pass down low and swept into the net. This was the type of play that was being setup in the last game but never materialized. The Stars were playing a diamond defense on the power play, which made moving the puck around the perimeter easier. The next goal was a scramble in front of the net that slipped pass

the goalie. The Firebirds goalie got hurt in between the two power play goals and was are replaced. All the work to tie the game, the Stars were able to get a goal to take the lead back. Regardless of the score the Firebirds have the momentum for the 3rd period.

3rd Period

The momentum for the Firebirds continued into the 3rd period. For most of the period, the Firebirds were the ones getting to the pucks and winning the battles. They also get second chances with shots missed to keep the puck in the attack zone. With 5 minutes to go the power play worked again to tie the game at 4. The puck bounced off the Stars' goalie in front of the net and scooped in for the tying goal. The Firebirds were not going to be denied. 2 minutes later a puck battle win against the board turned into a rush up the ice. The Firebird forward was able to get behind the net, slide in front of the goal, and go over the goalie pad for what would be the game winner. With two minutes left and the Stars' goalie pulled, the Firebirds got an empty net goal to seal the game.

Post-Game

Santa Claus was in attendance tonight, and he brought the presents in the form a Firebirds comeback win. The Firebirds played the best last 40 minutes of hockey this season so far. The first period sluggishness is something to work on. The number of Faceoff win and shots on goal are telling stats to the slow starts the past few games. The key to this game was a better power play execution for the Firebirds. The work put into making the right passes to open up the scoring opportunities paid off. It also helps to have the stands filled with cheering fans to create the energy in the arena. The Stars were clearly frustrated as the game went on, and they let their emotions get in the way. They lost their structure and lost puck battles in the last two periods. The next 6 games for the Firebirds are against the teams ahead of them in the standings. Firebirds hit the road this weekend to San Jose for 2 games. Hopefully, this character win will create the positive energy needed for this run. The Stars go to Henderson for 2 games to complete their road trip.

| | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | OT | Total |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----|-------|
| Stars | 3 | 1 | 0 | | 4 |
| Firebirds | 1 | 2 | 3 | | 6 |

Full game statistic can be found on the AHL site: <https://theahl.com/stats/game-center/1026781>

Team Game Stats:

| | Stars | Firebirds |
|--------------|-------|-----------|
| Shots | 32 | 30 |
| PP | 2 / 5 | 3 / 6 |
| PIM | 37 | 25 |
| SH | 0 | 0 |

Unofficial stats:

The following are unofficial statistics. The AHL doesn't show faceoff wins, icing, or offsides on the score sheet. I am tracking this on my own so there is a margin of error.

| | Icing | Offside |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| Stars | 9 | 2 |
| Firebirds | 5 | 2 |

| Faceoff Wins | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Stars | 15 | 11 | 10 | 36 |
| Firebirds | 7 | 12 | 8 | 27 |

The following is a breakdown of faceoff wins based on zone and player count.

| | Stars | | | Firebirds | | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Zone | ES | PP | PK | ES | PP | PK |
| Attack | 6 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Neutral | 9 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 1 |
| Defense | 15 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 1 |

ES – Even Strength

PP – Power Play

PK – Penalty Kill