

GAME REPORT

Home: CV Firebirds vs. Away: CHI Wolves

Date: Jan 12, 2025 3:00PM PST

Pre-Game

Head-to-Head: Both teams played last night for the first time in history so I will forgo the usual team pre-game summaries. The Firebirds played faster and smarter to get the win last night. The Wolves were over aggressive and didn't respect the Firebirds talent, which lead to several breakaway goals. The Wolves have one of the top goaltenders in the AHL in Spencer Martin, but after getting scored on so easily and often, he lost his cool at one point. The real star of last night was Daniel Sprong who was released from the Kraken, not picked up off waivers, and assigned to the Firebirds. He has something to prove. Coach Laxdal was very wise to put him in the line up immediately, and the impact on the whole team was evident. Of course, the Wolves are not going to roll over for this second game. In the post-game conference, Coach Laxdal acknowledged that both teams will be making adjustments for today's game. Expect to see a fast, hard hitting, and spirited game.

1st Period

Both teams came out a little slower compared to last night, but there was back and forth action. The Wolves got on the board first. The Firebirds couldn't get the puck out of the zone and the Wolves were able to intercept. The puck landed on the stick of Aleks Heimosalmi who made a few stickhandling moves and fired backhand at the goal. With several players around the goal, Nikke Kokko made a stab with the glove, but missed. The lead didn't last long. Later in the period, the Firebirds were on their second power play. Once the Firebirds established the zone, Brandon Biro found Logan Morrison below the goal line. Logan than made a power move to the goal and a couple of whacks at the puck and flipped it over Ruslan Khazheyev to tie up the score.

2nd Period

The Wolves came out early to take back the lead. Felix Unger Sorum fired a shot a Kokko who couldn't find the puck. Nick Swaney found the loose change and deposited the puck in the net. This was Nick's first goal of the season. The rest of the period evened out as both teams exchanged opportunities. At the 7:30 mark, Brandon Biro got a pass from Edward Sale to tie the game. 1 minute later, Lleyton Roed was able to hold the puck and the blue line and pass to Daniel Sprog. Daniel did the rest by sliding into the slot and putting the puck past Khazheyev. The rest of the period continued the back and forth, but the ice tilted to the Firebirds.

3rd Period

The Firebirds continue the solid play. On a power play, Brandon Biro, Logan Morrison, and Ben Meyers performed a nice tick-tac-toe that Ben put into the goal. With 8:29 left in the game, the Wolves pulled Khazheyev on a power play to get a 6 on 4. The Firebirds disrupted plays and took several shots at the empty net. Lleyton Roed got free with the puck and scored an empty net shorthanded goal. Originally, Kokko was given an assist, but AHL officials took it back later. For insult to injury, on a rush up the ice,

Khazheyev was collided into by one of his team mates on a rush up the ice with a Firebird. It took a few minutes, but he stayed in the game with a standing ovation by the Firebird faithful. Wolves didn't stop playing, but that was it for scoring.

Post-Game

24-hours later and the second game ends with the same score. In the post-game conference. Coach Laxdal made the point that the Wolves play hard-hitting high-pressure hockey, but it cannot last a full 60 minutes. Like last night's game, the Firebirds took over in the second period and continued the scoring into the 3rd period. For an encore, Daniel Sprong got the game winning goal. Every time Daniel has the puck; he moves like a predator looking either for a play or to get a shot on goal. The top star of the night was Brandon Biro who factored in 3 of 5 goals with a goal and assist. Another positive for the Firebirds is that they were 2 for 3 on the power play and killed all 3 Wolves power play chances. The Firebirds used to be at the bottom of the league in power plays, but the coaching staff and players have worked hard to find the right chemistry to score on the power play. The two game cross division test is complete, and the Firebirds get the 4 points on the weekend. They have move up to 2nd place in the Pacific Division. The two losses haven't hurt the Wolves that much in the Central Division as all the teams are close in the standings. This is the half way point of the season for the Firebirds, and they are in good form to get a playoff spot. They will face the Silver Knights on Thursday before hitting the road for 4 games. The Wolves are off to Grand Rapids and then come home to face Bakersfield in another cross divisional matchup.

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	OT	Total
Wolves	1	1	0		2
Firebirds	1	2	2		5

Full game statistic can be found on the AHL site: <https://theahl.com/stats/game-center/1027012>

Team Game Stats:

	Wolves	Firebirds
Shots	35	28
PP	0 / 3	2 / 3
PIM	6	6
SH	0	1

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	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
Wolves	3	2	3	8
Firebirds	3	3	5	11

Offsides	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
Wolves	2	1	0	3
Firebirds	0	1	1	2

Faceoff Wins	1 st	2 nd	3 rd		Total
Wolves	11	11	13		35
Firebirds	10	12	12		34

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

	Wolves			Firebirds		
Zone	ES	PP	PK	ES	PP	PK
Attack	10	1	0	6	2	1
Neutral	11	1	0	6	1	1
Defense	11	0	1	11	2	4

ES – Even Strength

PP – Power Play

PK – Penalty Kill