

PREVIEW: GULLS AT ROADRUNNERS

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Two points. That's all that stands between the Gulls and a berth in the 2019 Calder Cup Playoffs. It's a bit of déjà vu as the Gulls (35-24-4-3, 77 pts.) conclude their 2018-19 regular-season schedule with a back-to-back matchup against the Tucson Roadrunners but hold their own fate entering the final two contests.

Looking to secure a playoff spot for the third time in four seasons, the Gulls visit Tucson Convention Center Arena tonight (7:05 p.m. PT) and tomorrow, Saturday, Apr. 13 (7:05 p.m. PT) sitting third in the Pacific Division three points ahead of fifth-place Tucson and two points clear of fourth-place Colorado. All three teams have just two games left to play.

The Gulls will look to get back on track after dropping a 4-3 contest to the San Jose Barracuda Wednesday night at Pechanga Arena. Corey Tropp had a multi-point performance (1G/1A), with Justin Kloos scoring for a career-high third straight game and Ben Street tallying a goal to push his point streak to three games (2G/3A). Kevin Boyle made 29 saves, but four consecutive goals, including three in the second period for San Jose was too much for San Diego to overcome. Chase De Leo collected his team-leading 35th assist in the setback, extending his point streak to a career high nine games. De Leo has earned 28 points (11G/17A) with a +21 rating his last 25 games.

"We played pretty well in the first, played how we needed to play," said Gulls defenseman Jake Dotchin. "In the second we got a bit too cute, a bit too fancy, tried to do things we haven't done in a couple months here. It came back to bite us. There's no time for sulking or being

pissed off. You have to pick your head up and go get two points in Tucson.”

While the Gulls will have to play the most critical games of the season on the road, the team has showed the ability to win away from home ice all season long. San Diego has earned points in five straight road games (4-0-1-0) and points in 20 of their last 24 road contests (15-4-3-2). In total, the Gulls have posted a 17-10-3-2 record for 39 points away from home this season, the second-best mark in club history (19-10-3-0; 41 points in 2016-17).

The Gulls and Roadrunners will conclude an eight-game season series with this weekend’s matchup. San Diego is 16-12-1-1 all-time against Tucson, including an 8-6-0-0 road record, but the Roadrunners have won five of the six contests to date this season. Corey Tropp leads all active Gulls skaters in goals, assists, and points against Tucson in 24 career games (12G/16A).

“We just have to come out and play the way the San Diego Gulls can play,” said Tropp. “That stretch over the course of the season should give us all the confidence to go into a tough building and find a way to win. I think it’s a great opportunity. This is what you play for.”

Tucson enters this weekend series having lost consecutive contests to Bakersfield and Ontario, but have earned points in seven of its last 10 games overall to climb back into the playoff race. Tucson is on the outside looking in on the playoff race as it stands, needing a variety of scenarios to clinch a berth in the Calder Cup Playoffs for a second straight season.

Lane Pederson is the focal point of the Tucson offense as the second-year forward paces the club in points (21-23=44), goals and assists.

Right wing Connor Garland has recorded 20 points in 19 games with the Roadrunners and was recently reassigned to the AHL club after recording 13 goals in a 47 NHL games with the parent club Arizona Coyotes.

Adin Hill has taken the yeoman's work in net for the Roadrunners, posting a 15-14-4 record with two shutouts, a 2.56 GAA and a .908 save percentage in 34 appearances to date. Hunter Miska has appeared in 25 contests, posting a 10-8-4 record with a 3.08 GAA and .875 SV%.