



## JEFFREY LUTZ'S CHL REPORT

### Added pain

The group of Thunder players currently injured could almost form their own team. It would probably be better that way, because what hurts the most is not being able to play hockey.

Captain Andrew Martens and fellow defenseman Jesse Dudas join forwards Ian Lowe and Matt Summers on injured reserve. In their absence, a patchwork unit has dropped four straight games, all by a single goal and two beyond regulation.

The most familiar teammates for each of them are the ones that join them in the training room, but the shared experience has created a bond, albeit an impatient one.

"Obviously, we're all pushing for each other to get back as soon as possible," said Martens, who practiced this week and said he will attempt to play Wednesday at Tulsa. "It's always difficult, when you're an athlete, to be sitting in the stands watching your team play. We're trying to stay positive and wishing everybody quick recoveries on all these injuries."

Wichita's policy is to not disclose specific injuries, instead classifying them as upper- or lower-body in nature. All of the Thunder's injured players except Lowe have upper-body afflictions.

The time required for each injury, whether it sends a player to the 7-, 14- or 30-day IR, is treated more as a goal than a mandate. Martens, who missed one game (due to illness) in his first three years in Wichita, could play Wednesday in the second game since he was eligible to return.

Dudas is said to be on track to return after two weeks, Lowe's status is uncertain after



Marc Browning/Eagle correspondent  
**Jon Booras leads the Wichita Thunder with nine points, all coming by assist.**

his required 14 days ended this week, and Summers is determined not to stay out longer than a month. He takes particular pride in staying on the ice, having appeared in all 81 regular-season and playoff games last year.

"That's really what I'm shooting for," Summers said. "The second that 30 days is up, I'm ready to go."

The Thunder probably couldn't have picked four more inconvenient injuries. Martens earned his captainship by providing emotional leadership and by contributing on both ends. Summers has been perhaps the Thunder's most consistent player during his two prior years; Lowe is a power-play specialist and Dudas was leading the Central Hockey League in scoring by defensemen before he left Bloomington for the ECHL.

So it's not difficult to imagine their plight as injured players for a team frequently suffering narrow defeats and carrying a 1-4-3 record.

"We learn from the ones we let slip away," Summers said. "I really like the makeup of the

team. I definitely feel that I could contribute out there. These are one-goal games where anyone could step up and make that difference."

### Slap shots

■ The separation between the upper and lower halves of the league is becoming pronounced even early in the season. Four teams – Allen, Rapid City, Denver and Missouri – have at least 12 points, while five have five or fewer. The only middling team is Brampton, which sits in fifth place with nine points. Rapid City and Missouri are each undefeated.

■ The StoneWolf Casino Cup, named for a Pawnee, Okla., establishment, will be presented this year to the winner of the season series between Tulsa and the Thunder. The teams, which meet 14 times, are each owned by Wichita business owners Brandon, Rodney and Johnny Steven, and they're the only two original franchises remaining in the CHL.

### Plus

Thunder forward Matt Robinson has five goals in his last five games to account for his season total.

### Minus

Wichita hasn't found a productive offensive line or defenseman pair, as no active player has a positive plus/minus rating.

### Tap of the stick

Denver, which owns three wins over the Thunder this season, features the league's top two scorers, former Thunder forwards Troy Schwab and

Garrett Bembridge, who have combined for 27 points.

### Promotions

Saturday's home game against Missouri is Family Four Pack night, where families or groups can purchase four tickets, four hot dogs and four drinks for \$60.

### Defining digit

7

The number of games in which the Thunder has been tied or leading at some point during the third period. Wichita is 1-3-3 in those games.

### He said it

"We're having a lot of new guys right now and a lot of guys, being first-year pros, haven't stepped into this kind of pressure situation. (Veterans), myself included, need to step up in those times. We've got to be held accountable."

– Robinson after Sunday's home loss to Denver

### CHL Standings

	GP	W	L	OL	Pts	GF	GA
Rapid City	7	7	0	0	14	26	13
Allen	9	7	2	0	14	32	27
Denver	8	6	1	1	13	33	26
Missouri	6	6	0	0	12	26	11
Brampton	8	4	3	1	9	22	25
Quad City	5	2	2	1	5	25	22
St. Charles	6	2	3	1	5	16	27
Wichita	8	1	5	2	4	22	29
Tulsa	8	1	5	2	4	20	27
Arizona	8	1	6	1	3	16	29

Note: Two points are awarded for a win, one point for an overtime or shootout loss. Overtime or shootout losses are only denoted in the OL column, not the loss column.

#### Wednesday's Game

Wichita at Tulsa, 7:05 p.m.

#### Thursday's Game

Allen at Brampton, 6 p.m.

#### Friday's Games

Wichita at Missouri, 6:05 p.m.

Denver at Quad City, 6:05 p.m.

Arizona at Rapid City, 6:05 p.m.

Allen at Brampton, 6:30 p.m.

St. Charles at Tulsa, 6:35 p.m.

#### Saturday's Games

Missouri at Wichita, 6:05 p.m.

Denver at Quad City, 6:05 p.m.

Arizona at Rapid City, 6:05 p.m.

St. Charles at Tulsa, 6:35 p.m.

#### Sunday's Game

Allen at Brampton, 1 p.m.