

Don't Count Us Out Yet, Blues Say With A Roar

Stun Rocketeers 7-3 To Win New Playoff Life

VERNON 7, KAMLOOPS 3

Don't count those Vernon Blades out yet, they've just begun to fight! And Kamloops Rockets have the scars to prove it.

Sunday afternoon Vernon's raggle-taggle rascals in blue wowed a record crowd of 1,200 at the Civic Arena by rocking the mighty Rockets 7-3 in a hard-knocking, all-action playoff puckfest.

It was the worst beating suffered by the Rockets in Okanagan Junior "A" Hockey League play all season and, to have it coming from the lowly Blades, was rubbing it in good with a dash of salt.

More important, the stunning victory stalled the Rockets, at least temporarily, in their playoff drive to a third consecutive OJHL championship. Up to Sunday they had won four games in a row, including a rousing 10-3 rout of Kelowna Buckaroos Saturday night in Kamloops.

A win over Vernon Sunday would have given them a five-win, no-loss record and a tight strangle-hold in the 12-game round robin series.

Didn't Reckon On Blades

But they didn't reckon on those astounding Blades, who instead of making like paties, came on like playoff contenders to cut them down a peg and improve their own record in the bargain.

The Blades' record? Two wins and two losses which means they are only four points back of the classy Kamloopsians. And Tuesday night the gap could be narrowed to two points if the Vernon juniors continue their torrid pace by bouncing the Buckaroos for the second straight time when they tangle at the Civic Arena.

The Blades were never under-dogs Sunday. Although out-shot 27-23 on the game

they out-scored the Rockets in every period. After the first they led 2-1, in the second they upped the score to 5-2 and in the closing canto they bulged the twine twice, the Rockets once.

It was a solid team effort, quite probably the best effort of the season. They came to win Sunday and there was just no convincing them otherwise.

For the second game in a row Allan Rogan emerged as the number one star for the Blades. The diminutive winger rifled in two goals and assisted on a third to run his playoff count to six points in two games. He was also a standout on defence, unbalancing Kamloops wingers with his dogged fore-checking.

Others starring for Vernon were Bobby Stein who potted the winning goal and set up two more, Ralph Litzenberger, Corky Agar, Jim Stephen and Ike Coulter who each scored and assisted once. Another who figured largely in the Blade bombardment was old reliable Buck Sherk who assisted on three goals, one being Stein's winner.

Defensive Work Outstanding

Scoring power helped but what really killed the Rockets was the defensive work of the Blades. The goal-tending of Brian Woodward was exceptional, the checking of Jim Stephen, Gordie Nuyens and Dave MacKay inspired and the front-line skirmishing of forwards like Sherk, Litzenberger, Rogan, Coulter and Agar tireless and relentless.

Woodward made some fine

saves, especially in the first period when the Rockets roared their loudest. Altogether he stopped 27 shots to Lee Simpson's 23.

Stephen and Nuyens broke up a number of near break-aways with key checks and also did a fine job of bringing the puck out of their own zone and engineering counter-attacks.

Perhaps the outstanding defensive play of all was made in the first period when Litzenberger scooped a loose puck right off the Vernon goal-line with Woodward sprawled down and helpless to make a save.

Two centres and a winger did all the damage for Kamloops, scoring-wise. Pivots Murray Owen and Eric Shishido triggered goals in the first and second periods, respectively, with Glen Richards notching a third counter in the final stanza.

The game had its rough moments with 13 penalties being issued by referee Tony Winichuk, eight to the Rockets. Included were a pair of game misconducts to Vernon's Wilf Tantrum and Kamloops' Jim Harrison late in the game. Some injuries developed out of the rough stuff with Vernon's fiery Nuyens getting most of the hard knocks. In the first period a wayward stick cut open his ear and later, as the final bell sounded, Owen hooked and spilled him heavily, sending him to the hospital with what appeared to be a badly bruised shoulder.

Agar Struck

Agar got his knocks too in the second period when Kamloops defenceman Bill Steinke clubbed him to the ice with his stick. For this, Steinke drew five minutes for high sticking. Agar sought repairs in the dressing room and returned quickly.

The Blades meant business from the first face-off and didn't waste time taking the lead. At 1:57, with Rocket Ken Rodgers off for holding, Agar batted in a power play combination from Coulter and Sherk and at 3:56 Stephen streaked up the left boards, cut around a lone Kamloops defenceman and beat Simpson on a dazzling play to make it 2-0.

Midway through the period Owen clicked for the red-shirts, his rebound drive trickling under Woodward's pads amidst a furious scramble around the goalmouth.

The Blades won the game in the second period with three more unanswered goals. Rogan started proceedings off at 10:37, ramming in a puck which the Rockets hotly claimed never rolled over the goal-line. Stein tapped across a rebounder just inside the left post on another power play shortly after and it was 4-1 and Rogan put the Blades four goals up at 15:51, rifling in a Stephen-Stein pass.

Shishido scored on a sudden breakaway before the period ended and Richards slid in a screen shot at 7:48 of the third to edge the Rockets back to within two goals.

With the crowd now half apprehensive at the Rockets' resurgence the Blades suddenly came alive again and killed off the Kamloops comeback at the roots with another quick pair, Litzenberger deflecting in a Sherk - Nuyens set-up and Coulter neatly backhanding a 25-footer from Agar and Litzenberger.

Game Summary

First Period: 1. Vernon, Agar (Coulter (Sherk) 1:57. 2. Vernon, Stephen (unassisted) 3:56. 3. Kamloops, Owen (Harrison) 11:33. Penalties — Rodgers (holding) 0:37; Nuyens (interference) 9:01; Stephen (tripping) 14:37; Harrison (slashing) 17:28.

Second Period: 4. Vernon, Rogan (Stein) 10:37. 5. Vernon, Stein (Sherk, Rogan) 13:43. 6. Vernon, Rogan (Stephen, Stein) 15:51. 7. Kamloops, E. Shishido (Rinaldi) 17:42. Penalties — Harrison (slashing) 9:33; Levens (hooking) 12:01; Steinke (high sticking) 13:00; Agar (elbowing) 16:29.

Third Period: 8. Kamloops, Richards (Levens, Fourt) 7:48. 9. Vernon, Litzenberger (Sherk, Nuyens) 16:03. 10. Vernon, Coulter (Agar, Litzenberger) 18:25. Penalties — Harrison (roughing, game misc.) 19:44; Owen (hooking) 20:00.

Shots: Woodward 11, 5, 11 — 27. Simpson 6, 7, 10 — 23.

Clark Takes 'B'

Marsland Rink Wins Valentine

Three Vernon rinks took top loot in the Vernon Curling