

OJHL Unchanged After New Year's

Blues Keep 3rd With Split; Rockets Hold On To First

VERNON 1,4 PENTICTON-SUMMERLAND 3,2

Vernon Blades skated into 1965 still clinging precariously but stubbornly to their third place perch in the Okanagan Junior "A" Hockey League.

Penticton - Summerland Broncos momentarily knocked them off their ledge on New Year's Day, taking a 3-1 decision before a smallish crowd at Vernon Civic Arena, but the Blades recouped with a 4-2 win down in Summerland Saturday night to scramble back out of the cellar.

This status quo see-sawing was repeated elsewhere in the OJHL over the holiday weekend. Pace setting Kamloops Rockets had their three-point lead cut to one when second place Kelowna Buckaroos bombed them 11-2 New Year's Day in Kelowna but the Misslemen turned the tables 6-5 in Kamloops Saturday to regain their edge.

Each team has only six games remaining in regular season play. The schedule is set to wind up Saturday, Jan. 23 with the playoffs slated to start the following weekend.

The final three weeks of play will more than likely see the Rockets and Buck-

aroos in a neck-and-neck battle for first and the Blades and Broncos in another close fight for third. In the semi-finals the first and third finishers and the second and fourth placers will play off.

Maybe it was too much celebrating the night before but the Blades were anything but a dazzling hockey club on New Year's Day. They couldn't seem to get a consistent offence rolling nor could they manage to get the puck in the net when the occasional opportunity came a'knocking.

The Broncos weren't much better but they were alert enough to capitalize on the breaks when they got them.

Larry Palanio was their shining hero in this game. Late in the first period the speedy winger tipped in a pass-out from Ray Picco to give the Broncos a 1-0 lead and in the dying minutes of the second stanza he was suddenly called upon to man Penticton-Summerland's last line of defence when regular goalie Ernie Pushkarenko exited to the hospital with a severe head cut caused by a high flying puck.

Palanio probably even surprised himself in holding the Blades to a near shutout the rest of the way. Although the Blues blasted 12 shots at him, 10 in the final period, only Ralph Litzenberger's relay from Ike Coulter at 18:13 of the third found the mark.

In the meantime the Broncos substantially helped Palanio's cause when Keith MacInnes and then Picco came through with unassisted counters at the seven and nine-minute marks of the third.

The Blades came close to scoring on several occasions, the most noteworthy being when Dale Sorochuk missed a wide open net with the rebounder that injured Pushkarenko.

OJHL Standings

	W	L	T	GF	GA	P
Kam.	15	8	1	123	115	31
Kel.	13	9	2	113	76	28
Ver.	8	13	3	76	108	19
P.-S.	8	14	2	82	95	18

The Blades outshot the Broncos 23-17 but they were hardly impressive otherwise. Although Penticton-Summerland drew six of nine penalties issued, the home-towners were only able to click on their power play once and by that time the Broncos had things pretty well wrapped up.

The Broncos had a newcomer to their midst New Year's, a husky six-foot defenceman called Peter Gregg.

Saturday night the Blades found the narrow confines of Summerland's Jubilee Arena much to their liking. After grabbing a 1-0 edge in a wild first period in which they collected 30 minutes in penalties the locals went on to outscore their opposition 3-2 in the second frame.

The Broncos tried frantically to square things up in the third but good checking, particularly by Litzenberger, Coulter and Allan Rogan, held them off the scoresheet.

Buck Sherk and Dale Sorochuk each tallied a goal and one assist for the Blades with other singles coming from Marvin Maier and Bobby Stein.

Ray Picco and Bob McAdam sniped one apiece for the Broncos in the second period.

Vernon got the business end of referee Yogi Kraiger's whistle, serving nine of 13 penalties called including 10 minute misconducts to Stein and defenceman Dave MacKay. There was one fight involving the usually mild mannered Litzenberger and the Broncos' fiery McAdam.

Martin Hoffmann guarded the nets for Penticton-Summerland in the absence of the still injured Pushkarenko.

This coming weekend the Blades do battle with their arch rivals the Buckaroos in a home and away series starting Friday in Kelowna and ending Saturday here in Vernon.

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