



The largest Civic Arena crowd of the season watched as Kelowna Buckaroos and Vernon Blades battled it out in junior hockey playoff competition Sunday afternoon. Vernon's Gary

Koski (centre), reaches for puck during goalmouth scramble in front of the Kelowna net. Kelowna won 3-1.



Blades, Bucks Split First Pair

Blues Win Opener Friday But Cowboys Recoup Sun.

VERNON 5, 1; KELOWNA 3, 3

Vernon and Kelowna hockey fans, oil up your tonsils and hang on tight! You're in for the rocking'est, socking'est, thrilling'est junior playoff series you've ever laid eyes on.

And if you don't believe us, just ask any of the spellbound crowd of puck buffs that turned out for the first two games of the Vernon Blade-Kelowna Buckaroo best of seven semi-finals over the weekend. They'll give you an earfull.

First of all, they'll tell you about that action-packed series opener in Kelowna Memorial Arena Friday night. It's a game that the Blades, and their fans, will long remember and savor.

The Blades won it in typical playoff style, erasing a 3-1 deficit with two quick goals in the final five minutes of regulation time and then surging ahead with another unanswered pair in overtime to take a 5-3 decision and a one-game lead in the Okanagan Junior "A" Hockey League semi-final. It was the Blade's first victory over Kelowna this season and their first on Buckaroo ice since 1962.

If you still need convincing, any one of the record 1,200 odd spectators that poured into Vernon Civic Arena Sunday afternoon will give you the lowdown on the second game. The Buckaroos won this one 3-1 to even up the series again but Vernon supporters could hardly feel themselves short-changed because the Blades were in the game body and soul (mostly body) right down to the final buzzer.

Third game of the best of seven playoff goes Wednesday night at 8:30 p.m. in Kelowna Memorial Arena and it promises to be a sizzler of the same magnitude. The fourth game is scheduled back in Vernon Monday night.

The other semi-final series between Kamloops Rockets and Penticton-Summerland Broncos is also turning out to be a ringtailed doozer. The Rockets took the first two games, 5-2 in Kamloops Wednesday and 2-1 down in Penticton Friday, but the always unpredictable Broncos turned the tables Saturday back in Rocketville, winning 6-3.

This series continues Friday night in Penticton. A fifth game may also be played on Broncos' ice as the Kamloops arena is "frozen" for at least 10 days due to the annual B.C. Curling Association Bonspiel and Brier Playdowns which opened today.

Things looked pretty black for the Blades late in the third period of Friday's game, what with that 3-1 deficit staring them in the face, but some shrewd, far-sighted coaching by Hap Schaefer and a little opportunism on the part of Dale Sorochnik saved the day.

Because Schaefer had three full lines to work

with (the last-minute addition of defenceman Dave MacKay allowed Gary Koski to move to centre) he decided to keep one of them well rested until needed.

When the Buckaroos nullified a 1-0 second period Vernon lead with three quick goals in the third frame, that need arose. Schaefer sent the fresh line (Ike Coulter, Ralph Litzenberger and Koski) into battle and they responded instantly with a goal. Coulter did the honors, flipping in a pass from Litzenberger and Koski over Kelowna's prostrate goaltender Terry Lawrenson at 16:45 of the third.

Two minutes later, Sorochnik alertly dug Marvin Maier's relay out of a scramble of players and drilled a screened shot under Lawrenson's pads to send the game into overtime and the Blades bench into pandemonium.

The fired-up Blues continued their all-out offensive on the obviously flagging Buckaroos during the extra 10 minutes and were rewarded with two more glorious goals, one by Coulter again at 5:17 that skipped in off Lawrenson's desperately flailing stick and a clincher by Koski at 7:30 on a rapid tip-in from Jim Stephen and Bobby Stein.

Stein earlier struck with one of his blazing slapshots to give the Blues a temporary lead midway through the second period.

Defenceman Dave Cousins, winger Terry Kasubuchi and centre Marcello Verna replied in that order for the Bucks. Kasubuchi also picked up a pair of assists.

Vernon outshot Kelowna

43-41. There was brilliant goaltending on both sides by Vernon's Norm Schiman and Kelowna's stand-in Lawrenson.

Neutral referee Dale Cassell of Kamloops handed out 16 penalties in the game, nine to Kelowna.

Kasubuchi continued his personal campaign against Vernon with a big two-goal effort at the Civic Arena Sunday that gave the Bucks a 2-0 lead they were never to relinquish.

He deflected in a pass from Cousins and Verna at 17:51 of the first period and clicked from Verna again four minutes into the sandwich session.

Halfway through the second period, Buck Sherk drove a shot in off the skate of Kelowna's starry Mike Gaal, back in action after a throat illness, for Vernon's lone goal.

Four minutes later, however, John Strong broke away on the right wing with a pass from Verna and Gordon Wallace and lifted a high shot into the far corner of the net to give the Bucks the insurance they needed.

The third period was strictly a defensive duel, the two clubs matching each other check for check. The Blades only got six shots on the Kelowna goal, the Bucks but three. Over the whole game Kelowna outshot Vernon 25-23.

Although both teams dealt out same punishing body checks the game was one of the cleanest of the season. Referee Cassell only issued nine penalties, five to Vernon.

The Buckaroos had former regular Gordie Schnepf up from UBC to beef up their forward line in this game. Vernon's MacKay was similarly recruited at short notice from campus and he did an adequate job despite his long lay-off.

The lineup at the arena box office prior to the game was vividly reminiscent of senior hockey days. It stretched from the southeast to the southwest corner of the arena at one stage.

16 Attend Bird Tournay

Sixteen members of the Vernon Badminton Club took part in the Salmon Arm Badminton Tournament held last Saturday and Sunday.

Phyl Hanson came away with the ladies "B" Singles title, Bill Cunniff and Eldie Jamieson teamed up to take the Men's "C" Doubles, Bill Horner (Armstrong) won the Men's "C" Singles and Jessie Ann Gamble, another Armstrong member of the Vernon club, paired with Marlene Davies of Salmon Arm to take the Ladies Doubles "A" Event.

Others from Vernon competing included Lil Jamieson, Joan Cunniff, Kay Reid, Dodie Corner, Jack Humphreys, Gene Natsumura, Blake Nolan, Tom Edwards, Ron Weir and Jerry Lanton (Armstrong) and Frank Knobel.

And Now For K Juveniles W Summerland

VERNON 8, SU

Vernon Juvenile All-Valuable regulars on a week but you'd never have known

Despite the absence of high scoring centre Tom Williamson and rugged defenceman Gordie Clarke Odie Lowe's All-Stars showed depth galore in hammering the hapless Summerland Legionnaires 8-0 in the second game of a best of three juvenile hockey playoff series.

The convincing win, coupled with an earlier 12-1 decision, gave Vernon the series two games straight and a berth in the Okanagan-Mainline zone championship finals.

The All-Stars are scheduled to meet Kamloops within the next week in another best of three playoffs to decide the zone