

Bucs or Blades? . . .

TOM WILLIAMSON

The making of a champion

The Okanagan Junior Hockey League got underway at the weekend as the highly favored Kelowna Buckaroos outskated, outshot and eventually outscored the visiting Kamloops Kraft Kings 7-1.

The circuit's two other clubs, the Penticton Broncs and the Vernon Blades, see their initial action this week. Tonight Broncs host the Central City and Saturday night they are here in Vernon for the opener against Blades.

Friday night was no less than a grudge match for the powerful Bucs who last year finished with an impressive 16 point bulge atop the loop. Second place were the Kraft Kings and it was the same Kraft Kings who overpowered the Kelownians to go to the B.C. finals against the New Westminster Royals.

Bucs' coach Don Culley must have had this item in mind before the game when he introduced the "new Buckaroos" and said, "We'll go all the way this year." And one look at the Bucs made one think not whether the Bucs would win, but by how much and/or whether they would ever lose a game this season.

Kings lose more players to age than most graveyards are likely to gain in a month. Out the summer door went all-star forward Dale Sandyke and with him the circuit's perennial scoring fixture, Eric Shishido, another goal-getter, Roy Sakaki, and a host of

defensemen, Ed Begg, Wayne Leveay and Charlie Cook, to mention just a few.

Penticton will give up the services of an all-star defenseman when they bid George Brent adieu and also forward Moe Hays, who finished the season in the top scoring 10.

Vernon starts from scratch with even their only returnee, Ivan Malinosky, taking on a new, powerful look. They lose goalie Norm Schiman, defensemen Maurice Wernicke and Abbie Gambel and every forward including the circuit's top centreman of last year, Bob Stein.

Kelowna loses two all-stars in goalie Terry Lawrenson and defenseman Don Hebert and from there on up they are as solid as that city's bet to get the Junior College.

At Vernon, the Blades will look to the work of a 15-man executive that gave the reins to ex-Juvenile boss Odie Lowe, who they hope can mix the magic potion for locals. He brings into the Blades' opening game with Penticton Saturday, a new set of goal tenders in locals Gerry Allen and back-up man Dave Ingram.

The "new defense" is a teaming of Ken Polon, from Intermediate play in Cranbrook, and Alan Southward, a graduate from the Vernon Minor Hockey system. In the other rank will be Graham Elliott, who missed most of last year with a leg injury and an-

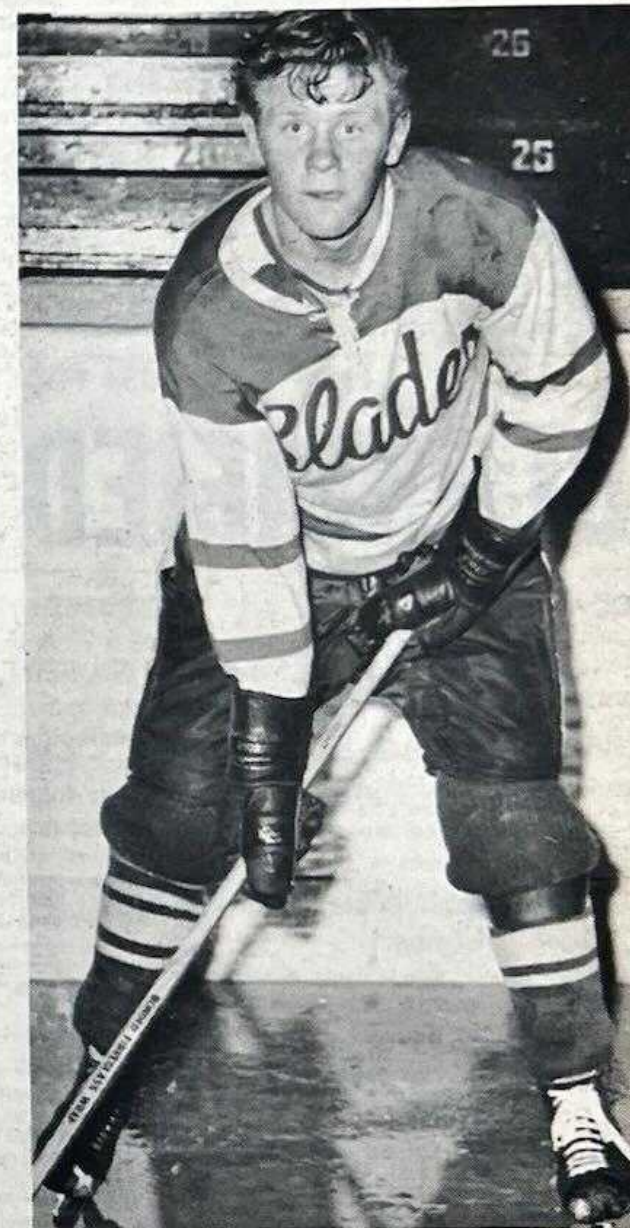
other import, Salmon Arm Juvenile grad, Glen Baron.

Centreman Tom Williamson will team with Malinosky and Pat Hembree, the Lethbridge, Alberta, winger, to make up the starting alignment, while Rick Reilly, Keith Rolston, from Williams Lake, and Lawrence Quecheck, recently from Quesnel via Moose Jaw Canucks, will make up a second. King Cam should help to beef up a third line when he is matched with Wayne LaTourneau, also of Salmon Arm, and Bruce Allen, another grad from local hockey wars, who missed last season going to school.

Penticton boss Jack Taggart looks to five out-of-town men, in two imports from Canmore, Alberta, a goalie, "Doc" Thompson, from Chilliwack, and anything he can garner from the Peach City minor hockey system.

A couple of Victoria smoothies in forwards Greg McClelland and Dennis Ferrill amount to the only "up front" talent benchman Bob Giordano will add to his already impressive scroll of ice men. And a "P.S." that might go unnoticed by any who haven't seen him in action, is netminder Rex Rideout, Ontario raised, who makes the loss of Lawrenson much easier.

Kamloops, as it seems, are the only team not to have added impressive outer - strength, while they seem to rely for the most part on the good Juvenile squad they raised last year.

. . .Broncs or Kings?

KEITH ROLSTON