

Essos set sights on BCJHL championship

The Vernon Essos have their sights set on the B.C. Junior Hockey League Championship, and nothing less.

With just four contests remaining in the current season, the Essos will be going all out to score decisive victories this weekend as they travel to Victoria Saturday and play New Westminster Sunday.

Four victories could give the Vernon Essos the stranglehold on second place. However any loss by the Essos could see them still in third and going into the semi-finals against the top-spot Penticton Broncos.

The Essos have the know how to handle the Broncos in a semi-final series and the real problems would start with the final round.

The secret in handling the Broncos would appear to be "do unto them before they do it to you."

Broncos captain Tom Madden elbowed Vernon defenceman Dawson Waite in last Saturday's contest in Penticton and the result required six stitches in Waite's chin. However, as

Vernon fans can testify, Waite easily manhandled Madden on several occasions during the Sunday night match in Vernon without the slightest fear. The Broncos chippy brand of hockey seems easiest overcome by solid bodychecks and plenty of shooting.

The Essos are expected to display the same type of aggressiveness against the Victoria Cougars and the New West Royals this weekend.

The Royals as usual will be out to defend their reputation as "the spoilers" as they knock top teams off their perches in the wind-up portion of the season.

Victoria has fallen before under the aggressive onslaught of Esso forwards leaving wide open spaces for the marksmanship of Dye, Vachon and Quechuck.

The possibility that Dick Marsh will not be able to play this weekend is not at all remote as he recuperates from torn angle ligaments received in the first two minutes of Sunday night's encounter with the Penticton Broncos.

Extreme improvements

in the calibre of hockey displayed by the Vernon defensive unit were remarked on by many of the fans at the game. Never before had they seen Bleakley and Waite handle their defensive duties so well.

Alexander was in tremendous form in the nets and one was reminded of the brand of hockey and teamwork that was shown when the Essos blanked the UBC Thunderbirds during the Christmas holiday exhibition contest.

All of the boys on the line worked as a complete unit and there were very few serious slip-ups.

Coach Odie Lowe is expected to start Al Alexander in Saturday's contest in Victoria. "He's been doing well, and as long as he keeps it up we'll leave him in," stated manager Vern Dye.

All the Essos have to do now is stay off the injury list and keep digging like they did Sunday night and they can be pretty well assured of coming through the finals. However, there are three other teams in the

league who are also gunning for the league championship and one moment of relaxation could possibly end the whole thing.

This was made extremely evident in Sunday's contest when the Essos let up the pressure in the third period and found themselves having to scramble to stay ahead of the Penticton marksmen.

When the Essos return to Vernon after Sunday's encounter in New Westminster, it will be back to the practice sessions in full force for the Friday and Saturday encounters on home ice with the visiting Cougars and Royals on Feb. 28 and March 1.

During the Essos-Royals contest the announcement and presentation of the "Most Valuable Player" award will be made.

Also the most popular player will be announced and presented with a certificate for a suit from Eaton's of Canada Ltd.

From that point on, it will be strictly "no-nonsense" hockey as Vernon moves into the semi-finals.

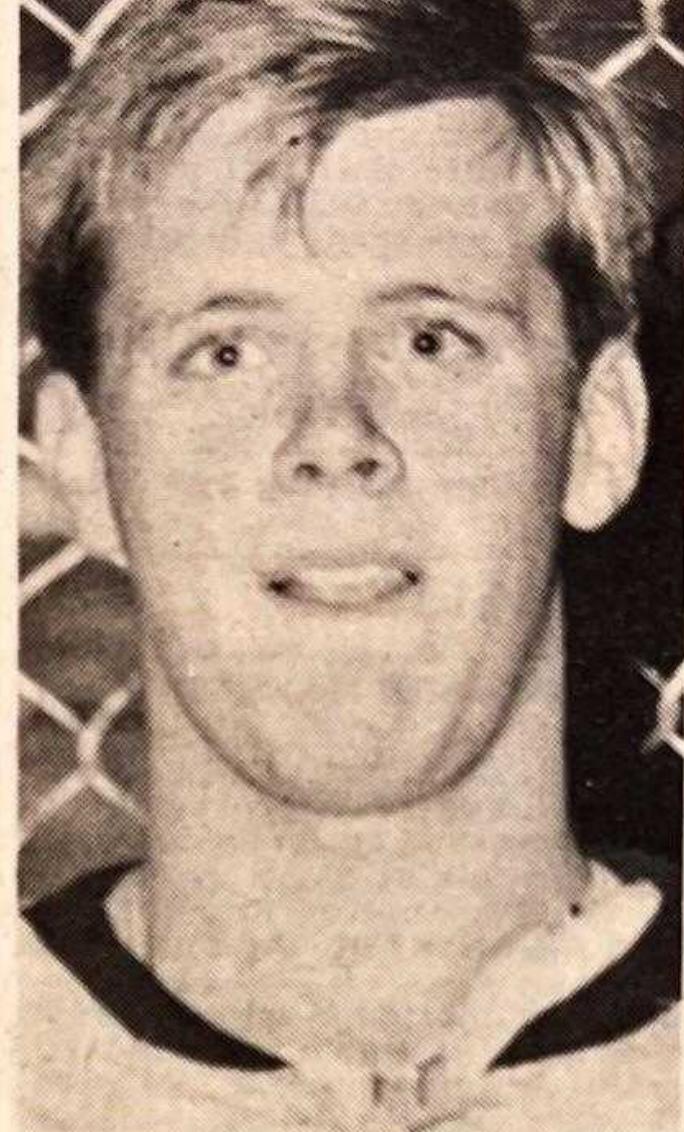
Essos hold third place

Al Alexander of the Vernon Essos has made a marked jump in the goal keepers' standings released this week by the BCJHL secretary. Now in fourth place, Alexander has

a game average of 4.47 over a series of 17 games.

The top Esso scorers have slipped one notch in the standings due to the fact that the team saw no league action for a two week period preceding last weekend's home-and-home series against the Penticton Broncos.

Wayne Dye has dropped to fifth spot while Lawrence Quechuck and Gerry Vachon have moved into sixth and eighth spots respectively.



AL ALEXANDER

SCORING STATISTICS

Games played up to and including February 16.

	G	A	Pts	PIM
Ed Hays, Penticton	55	43	98	65
Grant Evans, Victoria	43	32	75	89
Reg Cherenko, Penticton	30	30	60	6
Marv Ferg, Kamloops	15	43	58	2
Wayne Dye, Vernon	34	23	57	89
Mick Wilson, New West	28	29	57	34
Lawrence Quechuck, Vernon	26	30	56	61
Pat McMahon, Kelowna	21	31	52	63
Gerry Vachon, Vernon	31	20	51	8
Adrian Blais, Victoria	20	28	48	81
Al Knight, New Westminster	19	29	48	24
Doug Gibson, Victoria	18	30	48	39
Tom Madden, Penticton	5	43	48	79

Penalties — Individual — Larry Lenarduzzi, Kelowna, 161 mins.; Al Reid, New Westminster, 103 mins. Team — Kelowna, 719 mins.; Victoria, 625 mins.

Goalies' Averages—on 10 games or more played.

	G	GA	Ave.
Ron Grahame, Victoria	22	71	3.23
Dave McLelland, Penticton	31	120	3.87
Ron Pyle, Kelowna	30	130	4.33
Al Alexander, Vernon	17	76	4.47
Ed Forslund, Victoria	13	64	4.92
Jack Gilroy, Vernon	19	94	4.95
John Bade, Kamloops	22	112	5.09
Maurice L'Heureux, New West	31	158	5.09
Lorne Hudson, Kamloops	16	86	5.38

LEAGUE STANDING

	P	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts
Penticton	37	22	12	3	198	147	47
Victoria	35	19	10	6	197	135	44
Vernon	36	17	13	6	166	174	40
Kelowna	36	14	14	8	159	160	36
Kamloops	39	9	22	8	130	201	26
New West	35	9	19	7	147	180	25