

A gift victory

Vernon boost Rockets higher up the ladder

Vernon Essos spotted Kamloops Rockets three goals then came back with three of their own, only to allow the Rockets an unearned mid-third period goal to take the 4-3 win in B. C. junior A hockey action at Vernon Tuesday night.

Playing before an 800 odd home town crowd, Essos certainly didn't look like the team that beat first place Victoria Cougars 5-1 last Saturday.

Kamloops by comparison gave a visual impression they were in command of the game right from the opening face-off and with less than two minutes showing on the time clock, proved it by scoring a two-man effort by Bob Nystrom with help from Andy Larimie.

That goal came at 1:43 and three minutes later it was Kamloops again as John Senkpiel picked up a Marv Ferg pass to beat Esso goalie Gary Osborne.

Realization that the better team was on top of the play, reaction of the home town could only be described as hushed as they watched with disbelief the ragged play being demonstrated by their team in the first period.

The second period, particularly in the first half was little better as Essos continued to miss good scoring chances when on offensive drives and in their own end couldn't do anything right.

As in earlier games this season, Essos certainly weren't playing as a team and they knew it as time and again several players took it upon themselves to be one man shows only to find the puck being expertly taken away from them.

By 11:18 of the second frame, Rockets led 3-0 with their third marker a power play effort while Esso forward Gordon Merritt was sitting out a high sticking infraction.

That goal was quickly nullified however as Essos came back with a power play of their own 52 seconds later.

This time it was a Rocket in the penalty box as Andy Larimie was sent off 12 seconds earlier for holding.

The goal gave the Essos some measure of satisfaction and they showed it by coming back with goal number two late in the second period on a nice effort by Wayne Dye as he hit the short side after receiving a pass from Barry Bleakley at the 19:03 mark.

Going into the third stanza with the Rockets still out in front 3-2, Essos wasted little time in putting on the pressure and it paid off as Lawrence Quechuk, always an opportunist, picked up a loose puck and raced up the ice on a breakaway play and neatly drove a hard wrist shot under the stick side of Rocket goalie Mark Adkinson. His

effort was especially noteworthy as he had little time to get the shot away because a Rocket defenceman caught up to him and nearly put him off stride.

This goal came at 2:35 and gave the previously almost silent home fans something to cheer about.

Quechuk's solo effort was hardly enough however as Essos couldn't seem to get untracked and again they fell into their individual type, one-man plays.

A good many excellent scoring chances went by the boards as they worked in on the Rocket defensive line only to have Kamloops almost expertly take the puck away from each Esso player as he tried to go it alone.

The biggest boob of all came at 12:36 of the final period as the Vernon defence let the Rockets force their way in close to goalie Osborne and then in a sloppy effort on Osborne's part, let the puck slip into the net on what looked like either Osborne himself or another Vernon player doing the final act.

Closest Kamloops player on the play was Andy Larimie and he got the credit for the goal although he himself did not touch the puck at the moment the rubber slipped across the goal crease.

Statistically Vernon looked good as they outshot the Rockets 32-17. In the first period Adkinson was called upon to push 13 shots aside while at the other end of the

rink, Osborne stopped only seven put allowed two more past him.

The second period was much the same as Adkinson came up with 10 saves of 12 shots that came his way. Again in the third period, Vernon's 10 tries with nine of them failing proved little. Rockets averaged much better as they scored once in five tries.

In penalties, both teams broke even, as they picked up six apiece, but here again Rockets came out on top as all but one of their penalties were minors while Vernon's Bleakley got 10 minutes extra for saying nasty things from the penalty box while serving a two minute minor infraction. Bob Craig had earlier picked up a five minutes for fighting with Andy Larimie.

Only comment on the Craig-Larimie episode is that Craig won the encounter by intimidating the Rocket player to the point where Larimie had to defend himself after taking several blows to the face and being bodily thrown to the ice. Only after all this did he take off his glove and fight back.

Essos upcoming weekend road trip to the coast should prove interesting and if they cannot play any better than what was shown last night, then fans can expect little more than news of them taking a pair of defeats at the hands of Victoria and New Westminster.

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