

Junior hockey activity starts

B.C. junior hockey has come back into the picture following a two day gruelling meeting of teams and their directors in Penticton last weekend.

Big news out of the sessions is that a 60 game schedule between eight teams starts October 3 and goes through until March 19, 1971.

With the acceptance of Chilliwack as the newest entry into the league, a basic interlocking schedule is now being worked out with few exceptions to last years games, one being that interior teams will make one less trip to the lower mainland this winter.

Chilliwack's entry brings the league to eight teams with Victoria, Vancouver and New Westminster the other coast teams and Penticton, Kelowna, Kamloops and Vernon the four interior squads.

Other items released from the meeting indicates that the B.C. loop will be working closely with Prairie teams with a two division setup being brought into force, with B.C. being a B classification and the major prairie teams part of the A class. This replaces the old outlaw formation that ran for several years on the prairie scene.

A joint statement by B.C. junior president Howard Hamilton of Penticton and Prairie loop head Ron Butlin, is expected to be released within the next two days.

Basically one of the big things will be the affiliation of the western provinces into working agreements where six players can be transferred on an inter-branch setup.

This means for example, Vernon could have six players from the prairies on their roster and in turn have some of their better over-age players play for the senior club they will work with on the prairies.

At the moment Vernon officials are working out a plan to affiliate with one of the major centres, possibly Medicine Hat.

One aspect of the meeting which may not sit too well with some people is the plan to have Vancouver and Victoria and maybe New Westminster operate without any definite affiliation with another team. This will mean they might be allowed to use four over-age players if they desire to fill out their roster.

Actually without anyone saying so, it could mean that the coast teams are planning to

enter the major junior league within a year or so, and to do this must build their respective teams now.

Most officials who have studied the proposal by the coast teams feel they will not be any stronger than other teams, with an example of last year being noted that most of the better players were not from the graduating ranks of last season but rather players who will be still in the league this year.

Also released at the weekend was the change of ownership by the Victoria Cougars who will now be under the direction of Eric Bishop and three associates of Calgary. The group apparently have taken up the franchise from 50 Victoria shareholders and will operate with a smaller board of directors.

Kelowna is another team that changed hands with the Kelowna minor hockey association selling out to a Saskatoon syndicate.