

13th on home ice

Essos make it eight straight victories

Vernon 6, Penticton 4
Vernon Essos of the B.C. Junior A hockey league gave themselves a big Christmas present Tuesday as they came up with their 13th victory on home ice this season and ran their current win streak to eight games by edging second place Penticton Broncos 6-4.

The high flying league leaders also moved themselves up to the 46 point mark — 10 ahead of the Broncos with their 23rd victory of the season as against only five losses in 28 games played.

At the same time, the nine leading pointmen on the Essos roster added to their laurels by coming through with either goals or assists to boost themselves further up the ladder in that department.

John Price of course is still the leagues best man with his 27 goals and 43 assists for a 70 point total with team captain Jim Lawrence just five behind him on a 65 total with 16 goals and a league 49 assists to his credit.

Third leader on the tram and in the league is Ernie Gare who has racked up a 60 point total with 21 goals and 39 assists.

Next in line is Ed Johnstone and Wayne Dye with 52 points each with Dye scoring 27 goals and having 25 assists with Johnstone recording 25 goals and 27 assists.

Les Salo follows with his 23 goals and 14 assists for a 37 point tally with Glen Walton moving up fast with his 32 point total based on a 15 goal, 27 assists tally.

A pair of Essos rookies are next in line with their excellent

showing so far with Bill Vernon coming up with a four goal, 16 assist total and Jeff Shirley close with a nine goal, five assist showing.

The big story of course is the way the Essos came up with a tremendous team effort Tuesday in taking the win, mind, this is the way they have been playing for the past eight games and for the most part over the season so far, as they knit themselves into one of the finest teams ever to don Vernon uniforms.

Their style of play is by far the most versatile observed in many hockey seasons around these parts and taking nothing away from the Esso team that won the B.C. championship two years ago, are by far the smoothest skating squad ever to join forces.

Good example of their prowess stems from the fact that along with the veterans, the rookies on the squad are taking fine shape and best example here is Jeff Shirley, a Vernon minor hockey product who simply dazzled everyone with one of the finest displays of stick handling ever witnessed here as in the early moments of the Tuesday game, he worked past three Broncos defenders to go in and pull the Penticton goalie out of position before calmly banging the puck into the net.

This was the opening goal and came at the 5:28 mark of the first period, but Broncos came up with a power play goal just over two minutes later to even the score going into the second stanza at one each.

Second period action saw both teams again match goals with a pair each lighting up the score board.

Jim Lawrence put Vernon ahead on a single-handed effort after he and line mates Ed Johnstone and Wayne Dye worked deep into Bronco territory with just seconds of the middle period showing on the clock, as a matter of fact, a quick wrist shot by Johnstone almost from the face-off nicked the goal post but it was Lawrence stealing the puck at the 1:12 mark to do the honors.

Another power-play goal by Penticton again tied the score two minutes later with Vernon taking the lead for the third time in the game five minutes later at the 8:19 mark with Ed Johnstone finally getting inside the pipes with a sizzler from the right point which seemed to be screened by a mass of players around the goal mouth.

Penticton again fought back with some of their excellent style and just a minute and 19 seconds later tied the game once more.

Third period action began to turn in favour of the Essos as they once more proved they are the best by coming up with a three goal effort by the halfway point of the period which in turn seemed to take the wind out of the Bronco sails but they did stay in there with a final goal coming at the 15:57 mark.

Defenceman Lyle Brewer, another home grown product and a rookie blueline patroller started things off with a fine goal with only a minute and two seconds showing on the clock. Here again the smooth team work of Ed Johnstone and Wayne Dye made the play as they worked in close with a pass-back to the point where

Brewer banged in his second goal of the season.

Essos big win, or what proved to be the winner, came off the stick of John Price as he worked over the Bronco blue line, veered to the left side and then fooled everyone as he made a motion to pass to Ernie Gare who was sweeping down the middle, only to deftly flick the puck into the short side of Penticton goalie Glen Bueckert.

Glen Walton kept up his scoring pace of the past several games as he and Johnstone and Lawrence took advantage of a Penticton penalty to go in for the Essos final insurance marker.

Essos net-man Mike Smithson also kept to his league leading ways as he maintained his goals against average at 2.14 in 21 games in the nets.

Other stats on Smithson show him playing a total of 1,168 minutes and stopping 506 shots that have come at him. He also is the league leader with three shutout victories to his credit.

Essos travel to Kamloops for a Boxing Day game then return home for an exhibition game against the lower mainland junior B league leaders, the Nor West Caps Monday night. The Caps will play here also on Sunday afternoon Boxing Day when they meet the Vernon Juveniles at 4:15 p.m.

The Monday game has been set for 8 p.m. and then Tuesday night take on the Chilliwack Bruins in a regular fixture of the B.C. junior A league. That game too will start at 8 p.m.

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