

Babe keeps people happy



There is seldom a dull moment when Vancouver Canucks' ambassador Walter 'Babe' Pratt is around.

Babe arrived in Vernon last Friday, and left Sunday, after taking in the Winter Carnival Peeewe Hockey Tournament.

Along the way he made dozens of new friends, as he does anywhere he goes.

Whether or not you like him as a Hockey Night in Canada analyst, or even if you think his son Tracy, a member of the Canucks, is a lousy defenceman, you have to admire Babe.

He is known in the hockey world as the supreme story teller. Canucks couldn't have found themselves a better ambassador if they had hired Henry Kissinger.

Young or old, he is a hit with every hockey fan. Babe knows a bit about every hockey player who has laced on a pair of skates.

He asked how Vernon's contribution to pro hockey, Eddie Johnstone, is doing. Pratt was distressed to hear Eddie had a bad stay with Michigan Stags and is now with Greensboro in the Southern Hockey League.

Pratt said, "Johnstone is too good a hockey player to be playing in that league. I hope he can move up next year."

A GOOD ONE

On the subject of ex-Vernon Viking Don Murdoch, now starring with Medicine Hat Tigers, Babe feels the speedy winger will be ready for the big leagues in two or three years.

Pratt said, "Murdoch isn't ready right now, but he should be a good one."

But, what the NHL Hall-of-Fame loved talking about more than anything was the peewee tournament.

His love is hockey, whether it be junior or pro. But Babe said he looks forward to few things as much as coming to Vernon every year for the peewee tourney.

He said, "It is really great watching these kids. This is the time when they are the most exciting to watch."

Among his dislikes, and he makes it well-known, is the World Hockey Association.

NO GOOD WORDS

He has no good words for the WHA. Some of his views are: —It was a shame to see how badly Gordie Howe played in his last year with Detroit. He is a star in the WHA, so how weak is that league?

—If Bobby Hull was in the shape now, he was when he was in his hey-day with the Black Hawks, he'd score 100 goals in that league.

—There was one rich minor league hockey owner who was excited about getting a WHA franchise for his town. Luckily for him, he died before the WHA came into existence. He died rich, instead of poor.

—Where are the WHA teams going to get the fans if their planned expansion becomes a reality. Calgary, Ottawa, and cities like that, can't support a major league hockey team.

In some ways I have to agree with Babe. On one hand, it is great to see more people getting a chance to see, "major league", hockey. But, on the other hand, fans would be seeing much better hockey if there weren't so many teams.

Babe said he plans on returning next year for the fifth annual tournament, and you can bet, the Carnival would love to have him.

CFL may expand to London in '77

TORONTO (CP) — A six-man group from London held an informal meeting Tuesday with Canadian Football League commissioner Jake Gaudaur to discuss possible future expansion to the south-western Ontario city of 223,000.

Bob Duffus, former presi-

interest would be discussed at the league's annual meetings here next week.

Duffus said earlier that the group is proceeding "slowly and cautiously" with franchise application plans, and described his talks with Gaudaur as "exploratory."



ALTHOUGH THE KIDS of today never saw Babe Pratt or Frank Jerwas play hockey, they've heard about the greats of yesteryear and

loved meeting them at the Peeewe Hockey Tournament last weekend. Pratt, a member of the NHL Hall-of-Fame, is now an assistant

to the vice-president of the Vancouver Canucks. Jerwas, who played in the NHL with Boston, now resides in Vernon.

Knicks take first place

Kiwanis Knicks defeated Lions Lakers 34-26 and Henry Electric Bucks dumped the Elks Club Bullets 36-32 Tuesday in the final games of the Vernon Minor Basketball League schedule.

Pip Jordan and Bret Barker scored six points each for the Knicks while Glen Sirges replied with eight for the Lakers.

In the other game, Ray Nilsson scored 12 points as the Bucks fought from behind to defeat the Bullets.

Darrel Zimmerman had eight points for the winners while Glen Mitchell and Peter Wolgram each scored six for the Bullets.

Knicks finished the league in first-place with 20 points, eight ahead of the Bucks. Lakers placed third with 10 points while the last-place Elks had six.

Knicks led in points-scored with 369, while the cellar-dwelling Bullets had the best defence with only 274 points against.

Games cancelled due to bad roads

Bad road conditions have forced the cancellation of two B.C. Junior Hockey League games.

Nanaimo Clippers were scheduled to play in Vernon tonight and Thursday in Merritt, but both games have been postponed.

Clippers contacted the Vikings today and said they could not make it to the Interior with weather conditions the way they are after Tuesday night's heavy snowfall.

Up to 18 inches of new snow is reported in the Merritt - Princeton area.

With the cancellation of tonight's game, Vikings will now put the Winter Carnival Challenge Cup up for grabs Sunday when they host Langley Lords.

Vernon looked sharp in practice Monday and Tuesday and showed a lot of physical contact.

Coach Joe Tennant said, "Those are the best practices we've had since Christmas. The spirit is back, and the guys are hitting."

Only Viking on the hobble is defenceman Owen Lloyd who is bothered by a sore neck.

Meanwhile, Tuesday in Penticton, the Broncos thumped first-place Kelowna Buckaroos 9-3.

Gord MacKay had two goals for the Broncos, including his 50th of the season. Wade Jowett, Marc Severyn, and Del Iannone also had two each for the winners while Bob Irvine had the other.

Gordie Dumont, Bill Haynes, and Rick Benninghof replied for the Bucks.

Despite the loss, Kelowna still holds a 16 point lead over second place Penticton. Broncos now lead the third-place Vikings by 14 points.

PM urges Canada