

Good times ... and bad



Vernon Vikings didn't win the 1975 B.C. Junior Hockey League championship. As a matter of fact, Vikings didn't even win the Interior Division of the BCJHL.

But, the season did have some bright spots and the club shows promise for the 1975-76 season.

Vikings had a new coach and basically a new team this season. They got off to a good start, fell apart midway through the season, and started playing better hockey as the playoffs arrived.

Unfortunately, they weren't good enough to knock off the Kelowna Buckaroos.

SOME SURPRISES

The team did have some pleasant surprises. Home-grown product Gary Gilchrist blossomed into one of the deadliest snipers in the league with 35 goals during the regular season and another nine in the playoffs.

Owen Lloyd, the big 17 year old defenceman from North Vancouver, turned out to be the Vikings' best hitter and with a year of experience under his belt, could be a good one.

A skinny kid from Grand Forks turned into not only the top scorer on the Vikings, but also one of the best stickhandlers in the BCJHL. Lanky Ron Areshnekoff led the team with 84 points during the regular season and added another 19 in six playoff games.

Ron should be a sure bet to make the Medicine Hat Tigers, in tier one, next season.

But, on the other side of the fence, there were some disappointments.

LACKED BALANCE

As the season progressed, the team became more and more dependent on the WAG line, Greg Walmsley, Areshnekoff, and Gilchrist.

As a result, the club lacked offensive balance.

Defensively, Vernon's young blue line corps didn't mature as quickly as Coach Joe Tennant had hoped for. Veterans Terry Anaka and Brian Griese found themselves playing at least 40 minutes per game as the only reliable defencemen.

In the nets, both young Viking goalies, Jim Scammel and Darrell Furmanek had their good nights. Scammel is expected to stick with Medicine Hat next season and Furmanek, just 16 years old, should be Vikings' number one man.

MENTAL LETDOWN

Tennant feels his club made a lot of progress this year and blames the playoff loss to Kelowna mostly on a mental letdown in the second game of the series.

In that game, Vikings led 6-1 and lost 7-6. In the next two games, Vernon was completely outplayed.

Tennant said, "I wanted players who would be around a few years and I think we made a lot of gains.

"Every player we had this year will be invited back and with a few good prospects in Grand Forks, we shouldn't have to do a lot of recruiting."

Vikings had a young club in 1974-75, perhaps too young. When they came up against the older, and more experienced Buckaroos, the age difference showed.

With a few more veterans, Vernon might have given Kelowna a good run for their money. But, as it happened, Vikings will just have to wait for next year.

Tennant built a young club with the hope of putting together a team for the future. Let us hope that enough of the young players stick around next year to make the building program worthwhile.

Murdoch wins rookie award

Things couldn't be rosier these days for 18 year old Don Murdoch.

Murdoch, most valuable player in the B.C. Junior Hockey League with the Vernon Vikings in 1973-74, was Monday named the Western Canada Hockey League's Rookie of the Year.

The speedy right winger was the only unanimous choice in the WCHL's individual awards.

Murdoch, who earned 141 points, including 82 goals, both seasonal records for a WCHL rookie, received a first-place vote on every ballot.

Last week, he was named to the league's first all-star team.

LED LEAGUE

He led all scorers in the league with goals scored away from home with 41, the same number he scored in his home rink, Medicine Hat.

Murdoch told the Daily News although he may get drafted by the pros this year as an underage player, he plans on spending one more season with the Tigers.

He said, "If I do get drafted, I will probably sign a pro contract, but play next season in the WCHL."

Bryan Trottier, of Leth-



DON MURDOCH
... unanimous choice

bridge Broncos, was named the league's Most Valuable Player and Rick Lapointe, of Victoria Cougars, was selected as outstanding defenceman.

The WCHL goaltending award went to Saskatoon Blades' Bill Oleschuk and his teammate, Danny Arndt, picked up the most gentlemanly player award.

Cougars' Pat Ginnell received the accolades as Coach of the Year.