

Goals against average tells story for Vikings

Vernon Vikings currently have one more point than they did on this date last year.

That is not exactly a startling statistic, but what is impressive is at this time last season, they had played six more games.

Vikings currently have 20 points in 15 games, good enough to put them in a tie with Kelowna Buckaroos for first-place in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division. At this time last year, Vernon had 19 points in 21 games and trailed first-place Kelowna by nine points.

Main reason for the big change in Vikings' standing this year can be summed up in two words, — goals against.

BIG DIFFERENCE

Last year Vernon scored enough goals to win many games but suffered several 7-5 and 8-6 setbacks. Through the season, Jim Scammel and Darrell Furmanek combined for a 5.20 goals against average.

So far this year, Furmanek and Keith Ferner have a sparkling 3.73 average. Only Kelowna has a slightly better average with 3.71. Top team on the coast, Nanaimo Clippers, has a 4.16 goals against average.

In the goals-for department, Vikings have 86, an average of 5.73 per game. Only Kelowna with 6.14, and Nanaimo with 5.84, have scored more goals.

Vikings' Coach Joe Tennant attributes the improved defensive play to steady goaltending and a much-improved defence.

Tennant said, "We hoped to cut our goals against down considerably this year and to do that we knew we had to strengthen our defence.

"Veterans Brian Griese and Terry Anaka are off to good starts and the three rookies, Dean Pratico, Brian Maser, and Ken Oulton, are improving."

Particularly Oulton has been impressive in recent

games and has scored four times this season.

Tennant said, "We're just loaded with defencemen. I've got veterans Peter Poeschek and Gary Gassoff up on the wing, but if our rookies get in trouble, I can always drop them back."

Best goals against average last season in the BCJHL was 3.80, recorded by league champion Bellingham Blazers. Tennant feels if his club can keep its average near that mark, they'll be the team to beat.

Bentley leads Trail to win

TRAIL, B.C. (CP) — Doug Bentley's three goals led Trail Smoke Eaters to a 3-2 victory over Nelson Maple Leafs in a Western International Hockey League game before 800 fans Wednesday.

The win gave Trail sole possession of second place while

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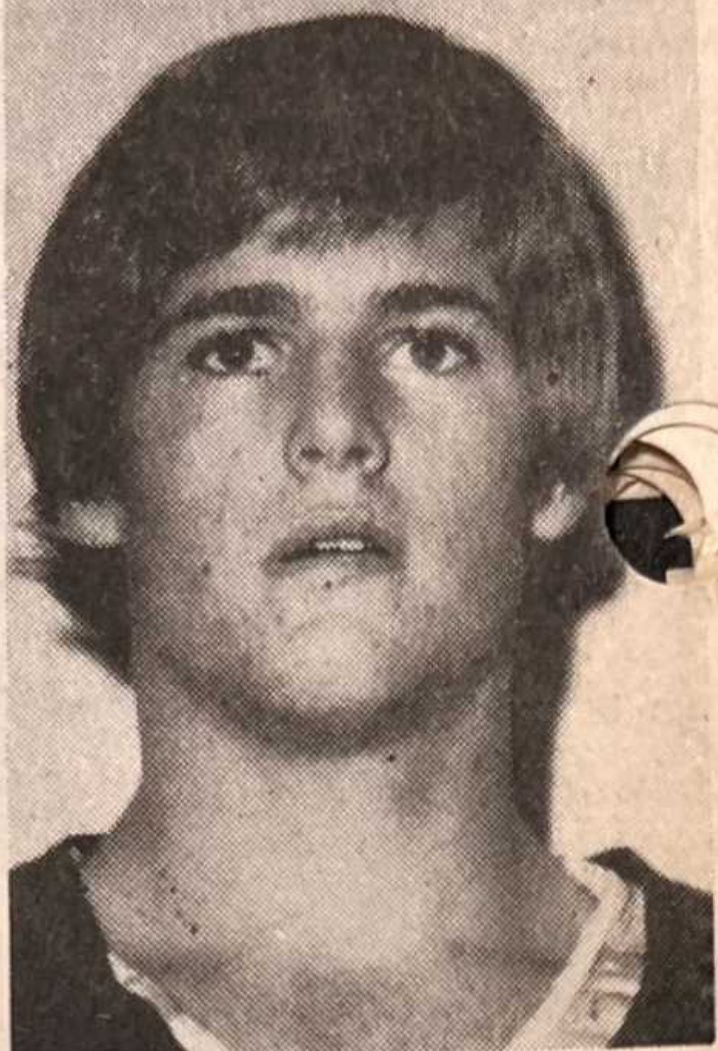
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EDDIE JOHNSTONE
... good year



JOHN SCAMMEL
... suspended

Eddie flying in Providence

Eddie Johnstone, of Vernon, appears to have found himself a home with Providence Reds, of the American Hockey League.

Johnstone, who joined the Reds late last season, is currently leading the team in scoring.

At one point last year, Eddie considered quitting professional hockey and returning to Vernon.

He was drafted from Medicine Hat Tigers, by Michigan Stags, after the 1973-74 season. He started last year with the financially troubled Stags but was later sent down to their farm club in the Southern Hockey League.

While in the minors, Johnstone had trouble collecting his pay cheques, as did several other players. Michigan moved to Baltimore, to become the Blades after Christmas, and Eddie was called up again, for a short time.

Finally, he became fed up with the WHA organization,

was able to get out of his contract, and joined Providence, New York Rangers' number one farm team.

With Rangers having so many problems, and Johnstone off to such a fast start, he may end up in New York before the season is over.

John Scammel, who played for Vernon Vikings part of last season, isn't having quite as much success.

Scammel started this year with Lethbridge Broncos, of the Western Canada Hockey League, but was sent down recently to Broncos' farm team in Taber.

The rugged defenceman, known more for his fighting ability than his talent as a hockey player, has now been suspended until Jan. 1.

In addition to Scammel's suspension, in an attempt to curb violence, the Alberta Junior League has suspended two other Taber players and fined the team's coach Vic Stasluk.