

Sports

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KENDALL'S KORNER

Go home Merritt!



For one of the few times this season, Vernon hockey fans got a first-hand look Wednesday at what everyone is talking about these days, "Violence on the ice."

Luckily, less than 400 fans were on hand for the game between Vernon Vikings and Merritt Centennials.

Once the score got to 6-2, for Vernon, everyone in attendance would have been smart to go home. From that point on, the lowly Centennials had no intention of playing hockey against the high-flying Vikings.

Both coaches, the fans, and players got on referee Bruce Walker, of Kelowna. But, he couldn't be faulted. It was Merritt's show.

Centennials changed coaches earlier this year, reportedly because their previous coach couldn't control the players. If Wednesday was any indication, they should never have changed.

SHOVING MATCHES

Harmless plays were being turned into shoving matches, after the whistle, because of cheap shots.

Vikings' Calvin Halasz, certainly not one of the most aggressive players in the league, froze the puck along the boards with Merritt defenceman Rick Hendricks. For his trouble, Halasz got a punch in the nose from Hendricks, after the whistle, for no reason.

Vernon's Gary Huth, a candidate for the Most Gentlemanly Player in the league, was almost drawn into a fight, after a cheap shot, after the whistle.

Certainly, Vikings were involved in several fisticuff exchanges, but all of them provoked by the Cents.

There is only one way to crack down on that type of garbage. It is up to League President Bryan Couling to fine and-or suspend the players and team.

It is no coincidence Centennials draw the smallest crowds of the season when they come to Vernon. People here just don't want to sit in a cold arena, watching a game, until 10:50 p.m. It seems obvious fans in Merritt are also becoming tired of that style of play. The crowds in that city have dwindled in recent weeks.

Centennials aren't back in Vernon again until Dec. 27, and I hate to think how many people are going to bother to go and watch a bunch of hackers.

JUNIOR RAMBLINGS

The B.C. Junior Hockey League has received at least two applications, from Kamloops groups, to locate a team in that city next season.

Kamloops city officials say that is news to them. As far as they are concerned, there is no ice available in Kamloops, and won't be until either the Chiefs move or another arena is built. And word from Kamloops is, the Chiefs aren't going to move.

Meanwhile in Kelowna, the civic strike lingers on and the Kelowna Buckaroos continue to lose money.

One unconfirmed report this week estimated the team's losses to date at \$22,000. That is a pretty big chunk of money for Wayne North and his partners to recover.

Vikings' parent club, Medicine Hat Tigers of the Western Canada Hockey League, is apparently having defensive problems. Tigers' Coach Jack Shupe is not happy with two or three of his defencemen, and may be looking to Vernon for help soon.

However, former Vikings Cliff Lane and Owen Lloyd are enjoying good years on the blue line with the Tigers.

Vikings to look at U.S. player

Vernon Vikings will have a new player in camp, Saturday, and he's travelling halfway across North America to get here.

John Morri, 17, is expected to arrive here this weekend from Connecticut, where he has been playing in the Eastern Intercollegiate Hockey League.

Earlier this year, Morri, originally from Los Angeles, was told by Detroit Red Wings goalie Ed Giacomin to get in touch with a Western Canada Hockey League team if he wanted to further his career.

So, he called Jack Shupe, coach and general manager of Medicine Hat Tigers. Shupe

referred him to Vikings, their number one farm team.

Vikings' Coach Joe Tennant says he doesn't know much about Morri but he is paying his own way here, so he must figure he has a good chance of making the club.

Tennant said, "He weighs 155 pounds and play centre or left wing. We'll give him a good look and if he can't make our team, we might send him down to Grand Forks.

Vikings are in action Saturday night when they host Penticton.

Vees currently trail the first-place Vikings by seven points, and Vernon has four games-in-hand.