

Bucks suffer from strike



As the Kelowna civic workers' strike lingers on, Kelowna Buckaroos owner and General Manager Wayne North continues to dig deeper into his pocket.

Although North isn't making his losses known publicly, reliable sources estimate the team's deficit so far this season between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

There is some talk in the Regatta City that the Bucks will be back in the rink this month. Rumor has it either the strike will be over before Christmas, or else special allowance will be made to allow the arenas to operate. But, the same rumor has been circulating now for two months.

To compound North's problems, he is now running into difficulty with his players.

Two weeks ago Bucks released forwards Mark Schnarr and John Uvegas, for financial reasons. However, Schnarr is better than several players on the Bucks and the story is that there was a dispute between the player and the club.

Then last week, Kelowna released goalie Claude Bertoli, from Prince George. With John McKerrow and Rick Schultz, Bertoli became expendable.

The next day, veteran defenceman Rick Benningshof informed North he was going home to Prince George because he had a job waiting for him. A strange coincidence.

Since Benningshof's announcement, he has been suspended by the Bucks, and North is looking for another defenceman.

Kelowna has now lost five of its last six games and is tied for last-place in the Interior Division with Merritt Centennials.

So, the strongest franchise in the B.C. Junior Hockey League has suddenly found itself floundering, and may get a little deeper underwater before the year is finished.

LEAGUE MEETING

The BCJHL will be holding its monthly meeting Thursday on the coast and at the top of the agenda will be the suspension to Merritt Coach Gary Swanson.

Swanson was suspended after a game in Vernon last week for what league president Bryan Couling said was, "An inability to control his players and deliberately sending players on the ice to start fights."

He was suspended until the league rules on the action at Thursday's meeting. It was originally thought that the suspension would be lifted at the meeting, but apparently several teams aren't too anxious to have him back.

Also to be discussed at the meeting is the league's playoff format. The eight teams in the loop voted at the start of the season to eliminate the last-place teams, in each division, from playoff competition.

But, three or four of the bottom teams are getting worried about losing their playoff gates and want to reverse their earlier vote. So, there appears to be a good chance that all eight teams may be in the playoffs.

The league all-star game is scheduled Jan. 28 in Nanaimo. Seventeen best players in the Interior Division will take on 17 of the best from the Coast.

It looks like Vikings could have six, or maybe seven, players on the Interior team. Especially if they keep up their current pace which has seen them win 16 of their last 18 games.

Sports

DON KENDALL, Sports Editor



FROM CONNECTICUT

Forward John Mori arrived in Vernon this week, from Connecticut, for a try out with Vernon Vikings. Mori, originally from Los Angeles, had been playing in the Eastern Collegiate League. At practice Mon-

day, he established himself as a good skater, but his size, only 150 pounds, is against him. He may see some action tonight when Vikings travel to Merritt to take on the Centennials.