

Every game important as season's end nears

Vernon Vikings are back in action tonight when they travel to Penticton to tangle with the Vees in B.C. Junior Hockey League action.

Vees visit Vernon on Wednesday.

Vikings desperately need two wins to keep ahead of the high-flying Nanaimo Clippers.

Vernon's biggest problem in recent weeks has been defeating its Okanagan rivals. Vikings have lost their last five games against Interior teams, including a 3-0 decision last time they hosted Penticton.

Despite that problem, Vikings' Coach Joe Tennant said he is confident his club will hang on to first-place.

Tennant said, "Every player knows what he has to

do. They're going to have to work in the next three weeks if they want first-place."

FOUR POINTS

Vikings lead second-place Nanaimo Clippers by four points, but the Clippers have two games-in-hand.

Tennant said, "We have a much better schedule in the remaining weeks than the Clippers. After tonight, we've just got two more road games."

Of Vernon's 10 remaining games, seven of them are at home, but four of those are against their nearest rivals. Clippers visit the Vikings in two weeks, and before the season ends in early-March, Kelowna Buckaroos play in Vernon three more times.

Nanaimo has a tough schedule coming up. This

week they play four games in four days, including two against Kelowna. Then next week, Clippers make a swing through the Interior playing three games in as many days.

GOALIES HURT

Penticton has not been without problems in the past week. After losing veteran netminder Dennis Ewanchuk with a leg injury two weeks ago, back-up man Pat Murphy was hurt last week.

With only a half-healthy Murphy and a midget goalie, Vees have now lost five games in-a-row and need at least one win against Vikings to have any hope of moving to fifth, from sixth place.

Vees trail fifth-place Merritt Centennials by seven points and both teams have nine games remaining.