Rockland emerges as champ

ROCKLAND, Ont. (CP) — Rockland Nationals, after only three years of existence, emerged Wednesday as Centennial Cup junior hockey champions, beating Spruce Grove Mets 7-3 in the fifth game of the best-of-seven national final.

The Nationals, representing the Central Junior League centred on the Ottawa Valley, took the series four games to one after beating Guelph Platers and Charlottetown Colonels in eastern playoffs.

It is the first time a CJHL club has won the national tier two championship, although Pembroke Lumber Kings and Smiths Falls Bears have reached the final once each in the six-year history of the competition.

Observers say the final was the best game of the series with both teams staying strictly to hockey as the Nationals went ahead 3-2 in the first period and 5-3 in the second.

The pace was fast and despite solid body work on both sides Spruce Grove, the defending champions from Alberta, took only six minor penalties compared with eight for the Nationals.

Gerry Lerous, named the first most valuable player in a Centennial Cup final and initial winner of the Air Canada Trophy, scored twice for Rockland to the delight of 1,600 home fans jammed into an arena originally built to hold 600.

BCAHA past president says violence growing

A past president of the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association delivered a stinging indictment against violence at the minor hockey level in an address Wednesday to the Vernon Rotary Club.

Don Ewart, a resident of Penticton and an active member of minor hockey on all levels since coming to the Okanagan in 1959, said he had resigned his executive position "because I feel I can do more outside the association than within."

While acknowledging that hockey at the professional level is no more violent than 20 years ago, "it certainly is (more violent) at the minor level than ever before." Ewart said the number of match penalties handed out by game officials has tripled in the past few years and statistics indicate it is getting worse.

"Coaches and parents are telling the young players to win at all costs and there is a lack of responsibility and discipline everywhere," he said. "I have been fighting the violence issue at the national level but I have been told to leave a good thing alone."

Ewart said he had visited almost every B.C. minor hockey association in the past two years and indicated he was pleased with the progress that had been made in some areas.

"Vernon has painted its arena and that is a 100 per cent improvement. Yet I am deeply disturbed to see the amount of drinking that goes on in the stands by parents while their 11-year-old sons are playing on the ice." I don't approve of this and I'm sure your city fathers do not as well.

Ewart said the only way minor hockey could improve its image was on the local level. "Every association has worked hard to improve the game. Right now its a big ego trip for everyone."

He said of all boys playing minor hockey in Canada today "only 11 per cent will ever sign a professional contract."

"It's bloody nonsense to send nine-year-old boys on trips to California and Quebec to play hockey. It puts too much pressure on them at too young an age."

Later in the question period, Vernon Senior Secondary School principal Greg Dickson expressed concern about hockey interfering with high school students' education. He said he had 10 years of statistical evidence to support his claim that 60 games of hockey each year made it impossible for the players to keep up with their studies.

Ewart said he urged the B.C. junior league to cut its schedule to better accommodate those students playing hockey, adding that the league officials were seriously considering his request.

Witch called in