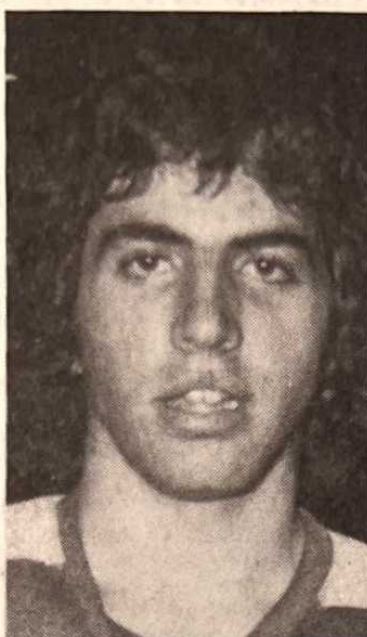


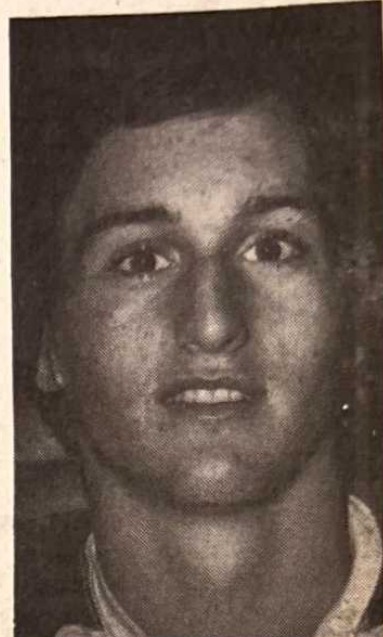
KEITH FERNER
... is back



RANDY WILLS
... on defence



GORD MCKAY
... leads Vees



GARY HUTH
... injured

Vikings host Penticton in BCJHL home opener

Vernon Vikings kick off their 1976-77 B.C. Junior Hockey League season tonight when they host Penticton Vees at 8 p.m.

Vikings, who shattered almost every BCJHL record last season, were eliminated in playoffs by Penticton.

Vernon Coach Gerry Wenman will be relying heavily on his goaltending and defensive corps to pull the team through the first part of the season.

BEST GOALIE

The league's best goalie in 1975-76, Keith Ferner, is back between the pipes for Vernon. The defence, led by sophomore Ken Oulton and promising rookies Brad McDonald and Randy Wills, is very mobile.

Up front, Vikings boast some of the best defensive forwards in the league including Gary Gassoff, Bruce Green, and Jack Lefley. However, when it comes to scoring goals, Vernon is expected to have a problem.

Vikings have no proven snipers in their line-up with the exception of 195-pound winger Gary Gilchrist. Unfortunately Gilchrist, who spent last year with Medicine Hat Tigers, will be leaving for pro camp this weekend.

General Manager Vern Dye told the Daily News he is not going to panic and bring in a bunch of forwards right now.

Dye said, "We'll find out our weak spots and then fill them. We're still hoping to come up with a couple more experienced forwards in the near future."

The Vernon manager expects to hear within a couple days from centres Steve Danshin and Darcy Wilkinson. The two players were offensive standouts with Vikings last year and are still undecided as to this year's plans.

Penticton, on paper, appears to be the team to beat this season. Vees only weakness is on defence.

In goal, Coach Terry Martin has two fine netminders. Jim Scammell spent the 1974-75 season in goal for Vernon, while Pat Murphy is the man who killed Vikings last year in playoffs.

Only experienced defenceman is Bob Dietterle, picked up from Chilliwack. After Dietterle, the best of the rookies appears to be Dave Smith from Victoria.

As the saying goes, "It is up front that counts," and Vees are loaded. In fact, Martin plans on using four lines tonight.

MCKAY BACK

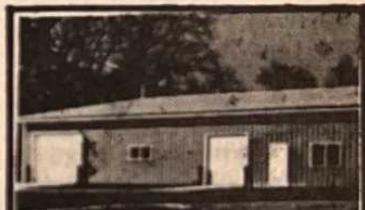
Mr. Excitement is back on the wing for Penticton. Gord McKay, considered too small for tier one hockey, is playing on a line with Vees' top rookie prospect Kevin Maxwell and right winger Andy Turner, from Norwes Caps.

Over the last two years, in league play, McKay has scored 112 times and accumulated 203 points. Prior to playoffs last season, former Vernon Coach Joe Tennant said, "If you stop McKay, you'll stop the Vees."

However, that is not the story this year. Penticton has an abundance of forwards including ex-Viking Gary Huth. Huth, who has not yet been released by Vernon, will not be dressed tonight because of a concussion picked up last weekend.

The smooth centre finished eighth in BCJHL scoring last year with 89 points.

Among the other talented Penticton scorers are John Uvegas, Shawn Dineen, and Darrell Becker.



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