

Vikings look sluggish despite posting victory

Despite playing their worst game in more than two weeks, Vernon Vikings edged Merritt Centennials 4-2 in B.C. Junior Hockey League action Wednesday at the Civic Arena.

BCJHL STANDINGS

INTERIOR DIVISION

TEAM	GP	W	L	T	Pts
Penticton	15	10	3	2	22
Kelowna	13	9	3	1	19
Vernon	15	7	7	1	15
Kamloops	14	4	10	0	8
Merritt	16	4	12	0	8

COAST DIVISION

Bellingham	14	9	5	0	18
Langley	16	9	7	0	18
Maple Ridge	15	8	7	0	16
Nanaimo	13	6	7	0	12
Abbotsford	13	4	9	0	8

The victory stretched Vikings' unbeaten streak to seven games.

Vernon appeared sluggish and perhaps a little overconfident, while Cents were just plain tired.

Merritt was playing its seventh game in nine days and had only 14 players dressed.

Vikings' General Manager Vern Dye was not pleased with his club's effort, but is not too worried.

Dye said, "It was a sloppy game, but I don't think our kids were really up for it. Maybe we were looking ahead to Kelowna this weekend."

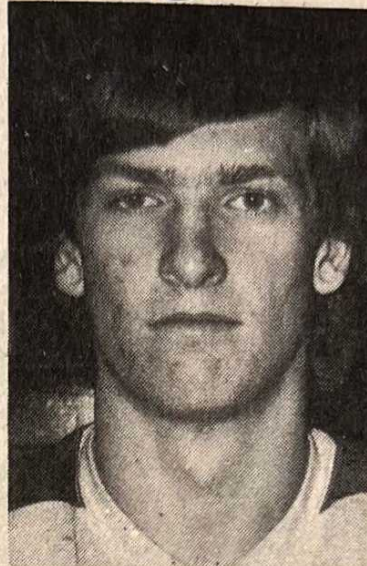
FOUR LINES

The Vernon GM went with four lines most of the night and gave everyone lots of ice time. Dye said, "I wanted a chance to have a good look at the guys who have been spending a lot of time on the bench."

Paul Chadwick gave Cents a 1-0 lead at 1:32 of the opening period when he broke in alone on Vikings' netminder Keith Verner. However, only three minutes later, Darcy Wilkinson tied the game.

Cents missed a glorious opportunity to regain the lead when Chadwick rattled a shot off the post on a three-on-one break. Then only minutes later, Ken Oulton put Vikings ahead to stay on their only powerplay opportunity of the night.

The clubs played a tight-checking second period until Wilkinson got his second of the night, and fifth of the season, at 18:07.



DARCY WILKINSON

... two goals

Chadwick, probably the most improved player in the BCJHL this season, put his club back in the game when he scored in a scramble at 8:46 of

the final period.

Any hope of forcing overtime died for Centennials at 19:10 when veteran Jack Lefley took a pass from Stacy Smeader and beat Merritt goalie Brad Earp.

Earp finished the game with 42 saves while Ferner blocked 32 shots.

Vernon was assessed four of five minor penalties.

BUSY WEEKEND

Vikings have a busy weekend ahead with back-to-back games against Kelowna Buckaroos. Vernon trail second-place Bucks by just four points and may never have a better opportunity to overtake their arch-rivals.

Dye said, "I don't think we'll have any trouble getting the guys up for these games. They know what they have to do."

Friday, Vikings travel to the Regatta City while Saturday, the Bucks visit Vernon.

Pensacola Open