KEN DILL'S KORNER

Wrong year for Panthers



There is a big difference between a good team — and a great team. Vernon Panthers had a good basketball team this year, in fact, probably the best hoop team to ever play at VSSS.

The problem is — the teams they met in the Okanagan this year were great.

Panthers had a well-balanced club which was exciting to watch. The crowds at home games this season prove the VSSS boys turned on a lot of fans with their hustling style.

However, Vernon picked the wrong year to have a good basketball team. Kelowna, Rutland, and Penticton all produced tremendous clubs. Kelowna won the valley title by beating Rutland last weekend. Penticton, rated as one of the top squads in B.C. — with perhaps the best player in the province, (Gord Herbert) didn't even reach the Okanagan championship game.

Panthers' Coach Rick Inrig is naturally dejected at not qualifying for the provincial tourney, but he is a realist.

Inrig said, "I'm a little discouraged, but let's face it — we were underdogs. I'm very happy with the effort our players gave this season."

ON HOOP MAP

It was that effort which put Vernon on the basketball map. For the first time, Panthers won the north zone title. During the season, seven Vernon players were named to various all-star teams.

The sad part is that the Okanagan was just too strong this year. Only two clubs made it to the B.C. tourney and four could easily have been competitive in the provincials. Penticton and Vernon would not have been embarassed by any team.

Inrig said, "We were so close. If we'd just beat Kelowna — it would have been a different story. The game could have gone either way."

Vernon's ace Steve King was cold against Kelowna, and that proved to be the difference. The sharpshooting guard was good on only three of 21 shots from the field.

However, King had a great season averaging 17 points per game.

At the valley tourney, King, Mike Kormos, and Tom Davison were interviewed by Caribou College, of Kamloops. However, King is expected to try his luck at university in Calgary or Victoria.

Inrig said, "It was great to see interest, from a college, in our players. They deserve a chance."

MAY NOT BE BACK

The fiery coach, who picked up more than his share of technical fouls this season, for directing unpleasant remarks at referees, was quiet and hesitant when he told us Monday he isn't sure if he'll coach next year.

He said, "We'll just have to wait and see. To be honest, I haven't given it much thought."

The 1977-78 season will be a rebuilding one for Vernon. But, luckily most other valley clubs will be rebuilding too. Only two regulars, Brent Zimmer and Glen Sirges will be back next year. Jim Tilton and Dean Steinly, who saw limited duty with Panthers, will be trying out. There are some good prospects from the local junior high schools.

Inrig said, "Our team worked so darned hard this year, and we were very close."

You can bet your bottom dollar if Inrig is back next year, Panthers will be hard-working — and pretty darned close.

While we're speaking of disappointment, discouragement, frustration, and downright gloom — we'd better mention Vernon Royals' Coach Delroy Routley.

Royals were expected to be contenders for the B.C. championship this year, and thanks to two upset losses, didn't even qualify for the provincial tournament.

It is hard to figure why a team would slump only two weeks after it seemed to be peaking. After months of work, it is also hard for Routley to find where he went wrong.

If you see a basketball coach, at VSSS, wandering around with his chin around his knees — give them an encouraging, "There's always next year."



A EVENT WINNERS

Don Maxnuk, inside left, organizer of the seventh annual Finning Tractor Bonspiel, held last weekend at the Vernon Curling Club, present the A Event Trophy to Sid Robbins. With Robbins, who played second, are teammates Elouise Robbins, lead; Basil Edwards, rear left, third; and Don Myler, skip, all of Vernon. About 200 curlers, from throughout British Columbia, took part in the three-day bonspiel. (Daily News Photo)

Gassoff returns for crucial game

It is do or die tonight for Vernon Vikings when they travel to Penticton to battle the Vees in B.C. Junior Hockey League quarter-final action at 8 p.m.

Vees hold a 3-1 stranglehold in the best-of-seven series.

Vikings' captain Gary Gassoff will be back in the line-up tonight after a 10-game suspension. Gassoff received the stiff sentence after pushing an official on Feb. 13, in Penticton.

The Vernon captain has watched his club fall behind in the series and blames the defence for most of the problems.

Gassoff said, "The defence isn't moving the puck fast enough. We're giving away far too many goals."

SPIRIT DOWN

One other thing has the 19-year-old veteran concerned about his club — team spirit.

Gassoff said, "The first game we won down in Penticton, the spirit on the bench and ice was just great. Since then, it has kind of gone downhill. We've got to get some excitement generated."



GARY GASSOFF
. . . back with club

Gassoff will be reunited on a line with centre Danny Wilkinson and Grant Sidnick. However, he may see some duty on defence.

Vikings' Coach Vern Dye said he is hesitant to make too many changes at this time. Dye said, "We'll probably play Gary up front, but if we get into difficulty, both Jack Lefley and him might see some duty on defence."

BACK IN VERNON

If a sixth game is needed, it will be played Thursday in Vernon.

Gassoff said, "If we can get by tonight's game I think we'll be okay. We'll have Byron (Smith) back next game. He can move on to Huth's line and Lefley could then go back to defence."

Smith is currently working on a three-game suspension for butt-ending.

Meanwhile, league scoring champion Kevin Maxwell, of Penticton, is listed as a doubtful starter. Maxwell injured his back in the fourth game and Vees will probably rest the slick centre.

Daily News

SPORTS Page

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Blues earn tie in finals

Armstrong and Vernon Blues battled to a 79-79 tie in the first game of the Vernon Commercial Men's Basketball League two-game, total-point final series Monday at VSSS.

It was the first time this season Armstrong has not been victorious.

Blues played their best game of the year and shot more than 40 per cent from the field.

Geoff White was a standout for Vernon with 28 points while Bob Herring sunk 26 and Vince Mikuska added 14. Nineteen of White's points came in the second-half.

League scoring champion Tony Wolcott was held to 23 points while Lance McGregor dropped in 14 for Armstrong.

Blues led 39-36 at half-time.

Second, and final, game is scheduled next Monday at VSSS.

Nelson scores overtime goal

Chris Nelson scored at 1:59 of sudden-death overtime to give Price and Markle a 7-6 victory over Winfield Raiders in North Okanagan Hockey League playoff action Monday at the Civic Arena.

The win puts Price and Markle in the NOHL league finals, while Raiders must now gain entry through the back door.

TWO GOALS

Don Jakes scored two goals for the winners while Clay Anderson, Garry Howard, Gerry Zaichowsky, and Wayne Dye added singles.

Ron Doig and Mike Roche each scored twice for Raiders while Fred Parrent and Clair Cassan added solos.

Dye scored at 17:21 of the third period to force the overtime session.

The teams were tied 2-2 after the first period, but P and M led 6-4 after the second. Parrent, at 50 seconds, and Roche, at 7:39, put Winfield in front.

33 SAVES

Vernon netminder Charlie Brinkham made 33 saves while Raiders' Bernie Feedham also blocked 33 shots, including four in overtime.

P and M was assessed seven of 11 minor penalties.

NOHL playoffs resume Wednesday with Vernon Sport Cougars hosting Lumby Flying Frenchmen, at 8:30 p.m. Winner will meet Winfield for the right to advance to the best-of-three final series.

Chuvalo regains title with ninth-round KO

TORONTO (CP) — George Chuvalo won back his title Monday night, knocking out Bob (Pretty Boy) Felstein at 1:22 of the ninth round in a scheduled 12-round bout for the Canadian heavyweight boxing championship.

The 39-year-old Chuvalo, at 249 pounds, punished his unwilling opponent with body blows for six rounds, then moved his attack to the head as Felstein dropped his guard.

The end came when Chuvalo staggered Felstein with an overhand right and followed up with a left-right combination to the head.

Felstein dropped to the canvas and took an eight count from referee Harry Davis. Chuvalo plowed in again to finish Felstein with another combination.

Both fighters, making come-backs after three years of inactivity, were targets for boos from a capacity crowd of over 5,500. The fans satisfied their morbid curiosity by paying $10, $15 and $20 to get into the North York Centennial Centre.

The victory for Chuvalo vindicated a decision by the Canadian Boxing Association last year that stripped him of the Canadian title for his failure to defend it.

DECISION PENDING

Asked later if he was happy to regain the title, Chuvalo said: "I never thought I lost it."

He said he will decide within the next two weeks whether he will comply with the association's latest edict—that he must defend his championship within 90 days or lose it again.

"I am going to Puerto Rico for some peace and serenity," he said. "I have to talk it over with my family before I decide on my future."

Chuvalo, obviously carrying too much blubber, snorted and spat as he stalked the 218-pound Felstein for the entire fight. Felstein was booted throughout by the crowd for excessive holding and soon became discouraged as Chuvalo dismissed all infrequent blows as love taps.

Chuvalo drew the ire of the crowd for butting with his head when he became exasperated with Felstein's holding tactics early in the bout.

"I was bored most of the fight," Chuvalo said. "If he would have wanted to fight, it would have been over a lot earlier."

FELSTEIN DESPERATE

Asked if he was surprised by Felstein's showing, he said: "He was more desperate than I thought."

Felstein, who took home 15,000 compared to Chuvalo's $10,000 share of the purse, said that his lack of conditioning made him an easy target.

"I trained for only three months after being off for three years. I'm a boxer and a boxer can't do that.

"There's a good possibility that I'll continue to fight," he said. "I feel I'm going to get another shot at George. Age is on my side. Chuvalo's almost 40, I'm 33."

Plenty of action in house leagues

Vernon's Senior Pup House League hockey teams have enjoyed a busy week.

In league play, Standard Oil stopped Bear Alignment 8-4, Tradeland outscored Rendall Tractor 8-4, Red Top Grocery edged Boston Pizza 5-4, and Village Green battled to a 6-6 tie with Athens Pizza.

In exhibition games, Athens blasted Enderby 14-3, Lumby Whiskey Jacks and Village Green 2-1, and Vernon House League Selects blasted Dumont 12-8 and 9-3.

FOUR GOALS

David Udy scored four goals for Standard while Scott Praill added a goal and four assists. Steve Merkley notched a solo.

Craig Neilson, Gerry Lukaszewich, Alex McBride, and Teddy Gray replied for Bear.

Greg Wenger led Tradeland's attack with four goals while Brent Gilchrist netted three and three assists. Frank Woods picked up a single.

Warren Schneider blinked the red light three times for Red Top while brother Willy scored a pair and added two assists.

Robbie Witham replied with two for Boston while Doug Short and John Witham added singles.

Darren Chamberlain and Darren Adams scored a pair each for Village Green with singles coming from Michael Novak and Walter Konkin.

Richard Louis countered with two for Athens while Dennis Holland, Troy Mick, and Howie Finch notched solos.

In Enderby, Holland scored six goals for Athens. Tooth McBride and Finch added three apiece while Davie Horochuk and Louis added singles.

In Lumby, Troy Mick picked up the lone Village Green goal.

10 POINTS

In the first game against Dumont, Scott Praill had a 10-point game, including six goals. David Udy had three goals and five assists while Brent Gilchrist scored twice and assisted on three others. Drew Shaw put one in the net.

In the second game, Praill scored four times while Greg Wenger added three. Singles went to Danny Martin and Frank Wood.

PEE WEES

In Pee Wee House League round-robin playoff action, Butcher Boys edged Vernon Sport 3-2, Elks blanked Universal 3-0, and Geniers fought to a 3-3 tie with Archie Fleming.

At the Oliver Pee Wee Tournament, Tradeland hammered Westgards 13-0, before dropping a 2-1 decision to Grand Forks. In exhibition games, Butcher Boys trounced Enderby 5-2 and Tradeland smashed Armstrong 7-1.

Fillies dethroned by a technicality

Lumby Flying Fillies blanked Trail Smokettes 4-0 and 5-0 in Women's Hockey League action last weekend in Lumby.

Lumby finished the eight-game season, against Trail, with four wins, two losses, and two ties. However, Trail will be representing the Interior, in the B.C. championships, against the coast winner.

Trail protested two games, played in February, when Lumby used an ineligible goalie. The win and tie were taken away from Fillies and four points awarded to Smokettes, giving them the league title.

Lumby Manager Josie Martin said, "Our goalie quit just prior to the two February games, so we picked up Lumby girl Marg Ruesch. We weren't trying to stack our team — we just wanted a goalie."

"They wouldn't let Ruesch play last weekend either so we had to put our best forward (Sandy Moss) in goal. We still clobbered them. I don't think it is right that we should lose the league because of a technicality."

Martin plans on challenging the coast champion, after the coast meets Trail.

Martin said, "I hope they accept our challenge. We'll give them a lot better game than Trail will."

Last weekend, Wendy Warren scored four goals in the two games while Charlene Huwer added a pair. Singles went to Janice Rogers, Bernice Irmen, and Betty Dyck.

Six-year slump ends for Toronto

PHILADELPHIA (CP) — Toronto Maple Leafs have conquered the Spectrum curse, a six-year jinx in which the National Hockey League team has failed to win a game in the home of Philadelphia Flyers.

The end came Monday night when the Leafs, plagued by a five-game winless streak, defeated the Flyers 4-2 in a penalty-filled game that resulted in four Toronto regulars being thrown out.

The win was the first for the Leafs in the Spectrum since they defeated the Flyers 4-0 on Dec. 19, 1971.

"Sure, we knew how long it had been since we won here," said Leafs defenceman Brian Glennie. "And after the second period, I was just hoping we wouldn't do what we usually do here—play two good periods and then fold."

The Leafs didn't fold this time, although they had every reason to.

They lost forward Dave Williams for a third-man-in game misconduct in the first period, then had to play the third period without centres Darryl Sittler and George Ferguson and left winger Pat Boutette—all as the result of incidents in the second period.

PALMATEER INVOLVED

They lost Ferguson when the Toronto player entered a fight between the Flyers Dave Holmgren and Leafs goaltender Mike Palmateer.

Sittler and Boutette were thrown out by referee Wally Harris following a brawl at the end of the second period that also saw Holmgren and Bill Barber of the Flyers given game misconducts.

Holmgren also received a five-minute major for butting, giving the Leafs a man advantage for the first five minutes of the third period.

In all, the Leafs were assessed 94 minutes in penalties, including two misconducts, four game misconducts, four majors and seven minors. The Flyers, with 77 minutes in penalties, had two misconducts, two game misconducts, five majors and six minors.

Jim McKenzy paced the Leafs with two goals, giving him 11 this season. Errol Thompson and Ian Turnbull got the other Toronto goals.

Turnbull's goal, his 21st of the season, came with five seconds left and into an empty net as the Flyers had pulled goalie Wayne Stephenson in favor of an extra attacker.

Centre Mel Bridgman scored both Philadelphia goals.

Bridgman gave the Flyers a 1-0 lead midway through the first period, but Toronto took a 2-1 lead on goals by Thompson and McKenny while the Flyers' Harvey Bennett was serving a double-minor penalty.

Bridgman's scored again for Philadelphia 35 seconds into the second period, but then McKenny stickhandled through the Philadelphia defence to score the go-ahead goal on a backhander.

The defeat ended a five-game Philadelphia winning streak.

Argos sign two big ones

TORONTO (CP) — Toronto Argonauts announced Monday the signing of two of United States college football's most highly-regarded offensive linemen—Mike Wilson and Joel Parrish—to three-year contracts.

Parrish and Wilson, both 21, played together at tackle and guard for four years at the University of Georgia where their play earned them all-America and most valuable player honors.

Sabres suffer setback

Two games were played Monday in White Valley Hockey League playoff action at the Lumby Arena.

Village Green Merchants thumped Coldstream Sabres 4-1 and LCB Braves edged Blades 3-2.

Ralph Litzenberger led the Merchants' attack with two goals while Doug Head and Wayne Nuyens added singles.

Bill May replied for Sabres.

In the other game, Dan and Ray Horochuk and Scott McKinley blinked the red light for Braves.

Dave Johnson and Larry Fischer countered for Blades.

Playoff action resumes tonight with a doubleheader. Lumby Royals tackle Burger Barons at 7 p.m. and Sabres battle Blades at 9 p.m.

JODZIO TO STAND TRIAL

QUEBEC (CP) — Rick Jodzio, formerly of Calgary Cowboys of the World Hockey Association, has been ordered to stand trial in Quebec Superior Court May 9 on a charge of assault with intent to injure Marc Tardif.



CANADIAN CHAMP

Vernon's Tim Ryan has been named Canada's junior boys freestyle archery champion. Competitions were held in each province and the results compared to determine winners. Ron Lippert of Kitchener, Ont., retained his national indoor freestyle title by edging Don Warren of Maple Ridge. Ryan has been rated as one of the top young shooters in Canada for the last three years.

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A Military Career Counsellor will be in VERNON on Tuesday, March 8th at the Village Green Inn from 12:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Registration on March 19

Vernon Minor Lacrosse Association has set its registration date for March 19, at Village Green Mall.

Registration fee will be $10 per boy.

More than 20 people attended the association's organizational meeting Monday night at the Vernon Lodge Hotel.