



HORSE TALK

with Janice Neufeld

The winner of the British Columbia Competitive Trail Riders Hi-Point Award, Op. W. D. (Bronco) Bill Pitcher, Vernon RCMC, has been a trail of hoof prints for most of his life.

This year's win involved accumulated points from nearly all of the rides offered in this central interior region. Bill and his eight-year-old half-arah gelding, Nam's Rocky, logged more than 20 miles in actual competition and averaged about 100 miles per week throughout the conditioning period.

Rocky's consistent high scores for soundness and stamina during long periods of stress are partly the result of qualities inherited from his Arabian sire and his strong, free-moving movement. A team effort and a close relationship between horse and rider paid for Bill and Rocky.

DOG MASTER

Pitcher was raised at Regina where his father was for many years the dog master with the RCMC at the training center for officers. During the time that Bill was growing up, the force required equitation training of all recruits and several highly qualified instructors were on the academy staff. Since equitation classes were also offered to staff families, Bill, at age 6 or 7 was being instructed by some very professional talent.

A close friendship formed between Bill and one equitation instructor who was from Denmark and the youngster was permitted to ride the teacher's own horse. One of the highlights of his early experiences was being asked to ride the great jumping horse, Our Mint, at the Toronto Royal Winter Fair for Marilyn Kramer, who had broken her wrist. This was the final round in a competition in which Our Mint won the Governor General's Cup.

Some of Bill's experiences involved episodes that were more frank than pleasure. One stern riding instructor, whose stirrup kept mysteriously coming off at the moment he tried to mount his horse in front of a line-up of recruits, eventually left his mark on young Bill.

MARTIAL ARTS

Besides the equitation center, staff families also had access to classes in swimming, full gymnasium privileges, music lessons, and training in martial arts. When it came to a choice between piano lessons and boxing, Pitcher didn't linger at the keyboard.

One of the people who had the most influence in Bill's life during his later teen years was a distant relative known as grandpa. Most of Bill's time was spent with grandpa, who was one of the managers of a huge PFRA ranch where he encompassed some 240 sections of land forming community pastures for cattlemen in a wide area of Saskatchewan. Riding with the regular cowboys on gathers and roundups gave Bill a good foundation in western equitation and stock horse skills.

Weekends would find the fellows gathered at the home corral engaged in fun roping, bronc riding, and other sports which eventually led Bill into amateur rodeo competition across the prairies.

After completing high school, Pitcher enlisted in the army and served for a time with the military police. Then the RCMC became his career. A big disappointment was in store for him during his training days. In, in spite of his horse, he did not qualify for the famed musical ride. He was too tall. At that time, six feet was the maximum height for riders in this colorful pageant.

AT PAN AM GAMES

Following his training, Bill and his wife, June, and later two boys, David and Shawn, were posted to Port Alberni and Prince Rupert besides four years back at the training depot in Regina. At Regina, he was an instructor in self-defense and qualified for the Canadian National Karate Team. He was used for the honors with the world's best in two Pan Am games in South America and the world championships in Bill and June now make their home on Windwalker Farm, on Grandview Plaza, along with their horses, dogs, and several cats. The whole farm has followed dad's lead and taken up horseback riding. Occasionally they beat him at his own game. Horse boarding, training, and conditioning keep them occupied when this athletic clan is not skiing, swimming, playing basketball, racquetball, soccer or hockey.



RACQUETBALL LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

Sandy Glennie and Keith Jespersen recently captured the Vernon Racquet Centre Monday Night Doubles League championship. Glennie and Brooks combined to defeat Curt Broughton and Steve White, 15-10 and 15-8, in the final match. From left are: Broughton, Glennie, Brooks, and White. Dianne Jespersen, left, won the Women's Morning League title.

Jespersen defeated Joyce Heard in the championship match. League play will resume at the club in February.

(Chris Castrucov Photos)

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Panthers to compete in Salmon Arm tourney

Vernon Panthers will compete in the eight-team Salmon Arm Golds Basketball Tournament this weekend.

Panthers are scheduled to meet Coreluc, of Quesnel, Friday at 5:45 p.m. Other first round games have Sir Charles Tupper, Vancouver, facing Kelowna Owls; Duxbury Park, of Victoria, taking on King George, of Vancouver; and

Salmon Arm hosting Burnaby Central.

Vernon Coach Jack Yamaka said it will be the first real test for his club. "We won three games in our tournament last weekend, but that was against weak teams," he said. "We'll run into some tough opposition in Salmon Arm."

Coreluc received honorable mention in this season's first top

10 provincial pool. The Quesnel school placed 10th at the provincial last season.

Winner of the Coreluc-Vernon confrontation will probably meet Kelowna in the semifinals. Owls, ranked fifth in B.C., are heavily favored to bounce Tupper.

In a recent tournament at Kamloops, Owls blasted North Kootenai Saints 85-41 in the final game.

NO FAVORS

"They sure didn't do us any favors when they made up the draw," Yamaka said. "Coreluc and Kelowna are both excellent teams."

The Vernon coach plans to employ a man-to-man defence, with lots of pressing.

He said, "We probably won't use a zone defence until later in the season when we've had a chance to work on it. I'm not concerned about our guys getting tired with a press because we've got a lot of bench strength."

"...we'll make lots of substitutions."

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

DECEMBER, 1976

Twenty-four schools' teams entered in an elementary school volleyball tournament that got under way today in four gymnasiums.

WOMEN'S HIGH SINGLE: Fran Marchand, 278; High Triple: Helen Franks, 272; High Average: Donna Cochrane, 250.

WOMEN'S HIGH SINGLE: Mike Marchand, 237; High Triple: Mike Marchand, 237; High Average: Fran Marchand, 237.

WOMEN'S HIGH SINGLE: Longhorns, 493; High Triple: Longhorns, 493; High Average: Longhorns, 493.

WOMEN'S HIGH SINGLE: Betty Driver, 707; High Triple: Betty Driver, 707; High Average: Betty Driver, 707.

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ONLY AMERICAN

Ford is unique in junior league

Vernon Lakers' winger Ron Ford is a unique situation. Ford is the only United States citizen playing in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division.

Ford graduated from the Seattle Snow Kings club last season. He was one of the final training camp cuts of Kelowna Buckaroos and was invited to tryout with Lakers.

"He has been a real asset to our club," said Vernon Coach Gord Mitchell. "There aren't many guys who work as hard as Ford."

TWO INJURIES

Ford's career has been hampered by two serious injuries. In the past two years, he was sidelined more than three months of his final season after getting hurt in an automobile accident. And this season, he suffered a separated shoulder in early October.

Despite missing eight games, Ford is still among Vernon's leading scorers with 16 points, including 11 goals, in 14 games.

"The biggest difference between mid and junior hockey is the toughness," Ford said. "It has been quite an adjustment. With the no-fighting rule, there is a lot of stickwork than there used to be."

Any players involved in fighting receive game suspensions. An altercation in the final 10 minutes, of the third period, resulted in the combatants receiving a one-game suspension.

Ford has spent most of the season on a line with centre Rob Kossan and winger Derek Waters. Waters, who has been in a prolonged slump, was replaced on that unit last weekend by Peter Oliphant.

CLOSE

games

for gals

Both games were decided by one goal in Vernon Major Women's Broomfield League action this week at Centennial rink.

Leanne Williams and Kathy Row scored to give Sunset Properties a 2-1 victory over Signal Bros.

Donna Schley replied with the lone goal for Signal Bros.

In the other game, Karen Copeland collected the only goal to give Commerce Imperials a 1-0 victory over Canadians.

League play resumes next Monday with Sunset meeting Commerce, at 7 p.m., and Canadians facing Western Commerce, at 8 p.m.



RON FORD from Seattle

"I think we clicked pretty well with Oliphant," Ford said. "We scored two goals against Revelstoke (last Sunday) and should have had more."

"I've written to several colleges and they are interested," he said. "I'm in a good situation because I'm an American."

National Collegiate Athletic Association, governing body in the U.S., limits the number of Canadian players allowed on university teams.

While his scholastic future remains uncertain, Ford is concentrating on helping Lakers end their slump. Merritt "Centennial" has been getting the bounces lately," Ford said. "We're due for a good game and I hope it is Thursday."

Next home game is Sunday, at 2 p.m. against Kelowna Buckaroos.

On Dec. 15, Kamloops Oilers will be in Vernon for an exhibition game against Lakers.

Goldenthal captures

handicap singles event

Vernon Five-pin Handicap Singles Tournament was held recently at Lincoln Lanes.

High games were rolled by: Goldenthal 358 and 310, Keckalo 354, Ed Boring 306, Boder 334, Ron Krause 303, Nashir Kassam 301, and Dave MacKenzie 312.

Bodger placed third with 1412 and Ken Holmberg finished fourth with 1406.

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think the other clubs are in better physical shape than us, but they have more time to work on specialties, like the powerplay.

Vernon's powerplay has been mediocre, at best. Last Sunday, they scored only twice while enjoying a manpower