

Franchise awarded

By GORD SMILEY
Daily News Sports

After almost two months of preparation, Chris Parker and Kelowna Sports Enterprises finally have their tier 1 junior hockey team, in Kelowna.

Parker, president of the group, received final approval Monday from the Western Hockey League at the league's annual meeting in Prince Albert.

Kelowna Sports first proposed a major junior team for Kelowna in late April and only recently received a sufficient amount of ice time from city council.

However, the tier 1 team has cut the number of home dates for the Kelowna Buckaroos, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, to 14. Earlier it was agreed each team would receive 22 home dates in Kelowna's Memorial Arena. The remainder of each team's schedule was to be played in the nearby Rutland Arena.

UNACCEPTABLE

Apparently, Parker wouldn't receive his franchise unless he was guaranteed 30 home dates, thus city council decided Monday to reduce Buckaroos' ice time.

Buckaroos' Owner Wayne North said council's decision is "absolutely unacceptable" and he will not keep his team in Kelowna under those circumstances.

"We've played in the Memorial Arena for 21 years and I believe we have the right

for survival," said North. "I was trying to live with the 22 home games, but what they've (city council) done now is unfortunate and unethical."

North said he doesn't think the tier 1 franchise can survive in Kelowna, even though Parker and Kelowna city council obviously think it can.

"Parker must have told them how much added revenue it would mean to the city," said North. "But the WHL doesn't have an attractive track record by any means and the Memorial Arena is 1,000 seats smaller than any other WHL arena."

The tier 1 franchise will be

charging \$2 more per ticket than the Buckaroos with prices set at \$6, \$5 and \$4. Buckaroos prices are \$4, \$3, and \$2.

Vernon Lakers' General Manager Vern Dye said he thinks the dollars are being spread too thinly in Kelowna for two junior teams to survive.

"The way things are nowadays, it's really asking for the people to dig into their pockets," said Dye.

BACKS NORTH

Dye said he backs North and thinks the Buckaroos would outdraw the tier 1 team with sufficient ice time.

"North is a pretty good

operator, I think he's proven that to the people of Kelowna," he said. "Plus, if Vernon and Merritt can get their acts together, it will make for a stronger league."

However, Dye said if the tier 1 club can ice a competitive team early in the year, then it could make things interesting.

"We'll have to wait to see what kind of team they come up with," said Dye.

Parker will be able to keep a few players from his BCJHL champion Penticton Knights, but first must negotiate with teams who hold those players' rights.

Tiremen clinch berth in fastball playdowns

Kal Tire clinched a berth in the Vernon Major Men's Fastball League playoffs with a 13-6 win over Armstrong Dairyland, Monday night, in Armstrong.

In another game, Falkland Merchants shutout National Hotel 2-0, at Alexis Park.

National Hotel leads the loop with 24 points, two more than Kal Tire. Coldstream Hotel Colts occupy third spot, with 22 points. Builders Group and Armstrong are tied for the fourth, and final, playoff berth with 20 points. However, Builders have

a game-in-hand.

In Armstrong, Ken Richardson was the winning pitcher while Doug Welch got tagged with the loss.

TOOK LEAD

Kal Tire took a 5-0 lead in the first inning. Dairyland narrowed the gap to 5-4, but Kal broke the game open with five runs in the sixth inning.

Jack Smith and Rene Vachon led Tiremen's 13-hit barrage with three basehits, in four trips to the plate. John Taporowski and Dave Ulrich hit safely twice for Kal.

At Alexis Park, winning pitcher Peter Huhn tossed a three-hitter for Falkland. Art Klassen got stuck with the defeat.

Merchants scored one run in the second inning and added another in the fourth.

TEAMS TIED

The victory moved Falkland into a tie for sixth place with Lumby Royals, at eight points.

League play resumes tonight with two games. At Alexis Park, Kal Tire takes on Builders at 6:30 p.m. In Lumby, Royals host Coldstream Hotel at 8 p.m.