

# Lawrence makes final Lakers cut

Vernon Lakers have trimmed their roster to 25 players, in preparation for the regular season opener when the team travels to Salmon Arm Saturday to take on the Shuswap Totems, B.C. Junior Hockey League's newest entry.

Lakers Coach Murray Lawrence said the final cuts were tough decisions, but they had to be made. Receiving their walking papers were Tom Roy, George Moutsos, Ron Olsen, Dave McMillan and Kelly Rosehill.

Roy came into camp highly touted by Lakers coaching staff and Moutsos had enjoyed a good camp, picking up a goal in the team's 8-5 win over Revelstoke Rockets in exhibition action. Olsen was also another surprise cut.

"Moutsos and Olsen were real difficult cuts to make," said Lawrence. "But they're both young men and they took my decision as men. I'm sure both of them will pop up in

the league somewhere.

An abundance of right wingers made Roy expendable. "It got to the point where we had to make a choice, it was just a matter of numbers."

Also part of the numbers game was Rob Kossan, who was released Tuesday from the Kamloops Oilers of the Western Hockey League. Kossan was Lakers' top centre last season and is expected to be in Lakers camp, Thursday.

"Robbie's an intelligent young man and I'm sure he's gotten over the decision," said Lawrence. "He's a tremendous player and he'll finish our lineup off nicely, he gives us good strength up the middle."

BCJHL players still aren't exactly sure they will stick with their respective team's, since the 25-man roster must be reduced to 19 by Jan. 10.

Not expected to get this far in Lakers camp is 15-year-old defenceman, Keith Chase, product of



ROB KOSSAN  
... in Vernon

Vernon minor hockey.

"Some people might be surprised, but he's got a lot of ability and a tremendous amount of potential," said Lawrence. "He's got good size and mobility and

can more than hold his own, he won't embarrass us."

Other local players to make the 25-man limit are Nick Kapicki, Kevin Savitsky, Norm Schwing, Kevin Thorlakson and Greg Kowal.

Lakers finished 2-1 during the exhibition schedule, their most impressive win a 5-4 triumph over BCJHL finalists from last season, Kelowna Buckaroos.

Vernon could be considered as a strong candidate for third place in the Interior division, behind last year's champion, Penticton Knights and Kelowna. One of the teams which will challenge Lakers for third spot will be the Totems.

"We know they've picked up a good goalkeeper and some new forwards so it's tough to say what they'll be like," said Lawrence.

Totems will make a return trip to Vernon, Sunday for a 7 p.m. start.

## Cougars bolster lineup with addition of Merritt

By DON KENDALL  
Daily News Sports Editor

Eight years ago Randy Merritt hoped to play hockey in Vernon. Now, it looks like he is finally going to get a chance to call the Civic Arena home.

Merritt is trying out with Vernon Cougars, of the North Okanagan Hockey League. And according to General manager Gary Swanson, about the only thing that could keep Merritt off the team is a broken leg.

"We're counting on Randy," Swanson said. "He is probably the best skater on the club."

Merritt tried out with Vernon Vikings, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, in 1975. However, the 16-year-old left winger was assigned to Vikings' junior B affiliate in Grand Forks.

After a one-year stint in Grand Forks, he played two seasons with Revelstoke Bruins, of the BCJHL. Since then, he has starred with the defunct Revelstoke Selkirks and Salmon Arm Aces, both of the NOHL.

Merritt said he is travelling from Revelstoke three to four times per week because he wants to play competitive hockey. "I guess I'm crazy to come that far (275 kilometres round trip), but I want to play hockey," he said.

Merritt, now 24, will only have to make the trip alone for two months. Cougars' defenceman Bernie Reed also lives in Revelstoke. Reed, who underwent shoulder surgery last weekend, is expected to return to the club in late-November.

"It looks like we're going to have a

good club," Merritt said, "We've got a lot of good hockey players in camp."

Merritt has grown considerably since he was known as one of the best midget wingers in the province. However, the 5'10", 180-pound forward still lists speed as his main attribute.

"Skating has always been my strength," he said.

Swanson said there is a good possibility Merritt may play centre for Cougars because the club is already strong on left wing. "We'll have to see how Randy adjusts to centre," Swanson said. "With his speed, I don't think it should be a problem."

Cougars play their season open Saturday, at home, against Oliver Bighorns.