IN JUNIOR HOCKEY

Kapicki gets his chance



VERNON MINOR hockey product, Nick Kapicki, has already established himself as one of the top penalty killers with Vernon Lakers. Kapicki and the rest of the Lakers will try for their first win when they host Revelstoke Rockets, Friday, in the Civic Arena.

(Daily News Photo)

By GORD SMILEY
Daily News Sports

Nick Kapicki waited more than a year to play regularly with Vernon Lakers, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, and now he's proving he can play with the best of them.

Kapicki was released from last year's version of the team when Gord MacBeth was coach. However, this year under the guidance of Head Coach Murray Lawrence, Kapicki is the team's top penalty killer and takes a regular shift.

Kapicki, who stands 5'6" and weighs 145 pounds, is considered by many to be too small to play junior hockey. But Lawrence, and more importantly Kapicki himself, have dispelled that theory.

"I played a few games up in Prince George with the team and then they released me," said Kapicki. "He (MacBeth) said it was due to my size, I really didn't agree with the decision."

Now with Lawrence calling the shots, Kapicki has been given the chance he deserved and he isn't disappointing.

AN OPPORTUNITY

"Mr. Lawrence has given me the opportunity to show what I can do," said Kapicki. "I don't know if he (Lawrence) wants to use me as a penalty killer or on a regular line, but it really doesn't matter, just as long as I play."

Despite the fact Lakers are 0-2 on the year, Kapicki thinks with the talent assembled on the team, plus with Lawrence as coach, Lakers can go a long way this season.

"I think he's a really good coach, he gets on the same wave length as the players, and still has discipline," said Kapicki. "Last year the big thing was the lack of discipline and it kind of got away on him (MacBeth). But this year Lawrence has respect for his players and we respect him."

Kapicki played for Vernon Juvenile Reps last year and led them to the league final, where they lost to Penticton. Earlier this year he attended the rookie camp of Kamloops Oilers, of the Western Hockey League.

"It was a three-day camp with two games everyday," he said. "There was some pretty big guys there, but it wasn't much different than here because it was a rookie camp."

MOTORS AROUND

Kapicki said he tries to avoid the heavy hitting as much as possible, but still isn't afraid to mix it up.

"I just like to go out there and motor around," said Kapicki. "But I still have to help out and do some hitting on my own."

Besides getting used to the more aggressive play in junior hockey, Kapicki also has to make adjustments as far as quickness in play goes.

"It's a lot faster in junior, there's not much time to think or look around. Once you get the puck you have to know what to do with or you're in trouble."

The adjustment to junior has been made easier for Kapicki by the few returning players in Lakers' lineup.

"We have guys like Robbie Kossan, who is really talented, and Peter Olipant, who has been in the league before, and know what to expect and that helps the rookies out."

Kapicki, 18, is in his final year of high school so coupled with the rigors of hockey, he also has to keep up on his studies.

Kapicki and company will try for their first win of the season when they host Revelstoke Rockets, Friday, at 8 p.m. On Saturday, the team makes a return visit to Revelstoke and then will be back home Sunday, for a 7 p.m. start with the Kelowna Buckaroos.

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sion money, though the television revenue is a point of dispute — the networks are paying their regular fees for the first two weeks of the strike, but owners are counting it as

chief negotiator for the management council, said the owners were willing to guarantee the $1.6 billion they have offered, "if the union drops its demand for a wage scale."