

Junior club will improve

By GORD SMILEY Daily News Sports

If anyone cares to remember back to the 1981-82 Vernon Lakers and I can't imagine why anyone would, but with a little investigation one would realize the team ended the season on a 23 game winless streak, but who's counting.

This year's team has lost its first two games, to the Shuswap Totems. Therefore, the Vernon Lakers have not won a B.C. Junior Hockey League regular season encounter in their last 25 starts.

However, this year's version of the team is vastly different from last year's. First, the team has only one owner (Ray (Dick) Williment), compared to the 10 which owned the team last year. Second, the team has a new coach (Murray Lawrence) who has already gained the respect of his players, which was desperately lacking last year. Third, the team has only three returning players (Gord Simpson, Rob Kossan and Peter Oliphant), two of them late cuts from tier one teams and the other the team's top penalty killer from a year ago.

On top of that the team also has an impressive crop of rookies plus some late releases from Kamloops Oilers of the Western Hockey League.

It's because of all those reasons why the Lakers haven't begun pushing any panic buttons yet.

Strong third

I realize it's still a young season, but I believe Lakers have a quality hockey team which could make a run at second place in the Interior if absolutely everything went right. Taking into consideration everything might not go right, Lakers should finish a strong third, followed by Shuswap in fourth, Revelstoke in fifth and Merritt Centennials have pretty well wrapped up sixth and last spot.

The battle for first will of course be between defending B.C. champions, Penticton Knights and the Buckaroos from Kelowna.

Lakers fans, which were few and far between last year, crashed the gates on Sunday and filled up about 500 of the seats in the Civic Arena. The figure isn't startling by any stretch of the imagination, but it is a start.

Wins needed

Once the Lakers start putting a few wins under their belt, the average attendance figure should stay at about 500. However, if the wins don't come and losses do, that average attendance figure could drop to 200.

I don't think it's any secret Vernon sports fans won't support a losing team. So, it's up to the Lakers themselves, they're in control of their own destiny. This team is the make it or break it team.

Two years ago Lakers won a total of eight regular season games. Last year, they startled the sporting world by winning nine games. That's 17 wins in the last two years, not something that will make the Hockey News.

Lakers play their third game of the year, Friday, when they play host to the Revelstoke Rockets. It might only be the third game of the season, but it's a must win for the Lakers. They have to develop that winning attitude and forget about previous seasons.

To go out on a limb, lakers will win Friday and again on Saturday when they pay a return trip to Rocketsville. Sunday's contest against the Buckaroos, here in the Civic Arena should be a real slugfest, that one is a toss-up, but I'll have to give Buckaroos a bit of an edge, Lakers will probably be leg weary.

It's a big test for the locals, a test they have to pass.



Lakers continue to sign players

Kamloops Oilers of the Western Hockey League have confirmed they're sending goaltender Shawn Oswald back to the Vernon Lakers of the B.C. Junior Hockey League.

Oswald was Lakers number one goaltender last season and was called up by Oilers towards the latter part of the season.

Oswald was listed as Oilers number three goaltender this year and was being sent to Vernon to get some playing time. However, no one knows where Oswald is.

"We were told he was being cut and should have been here yesterday (Tuesday)," said Lakers Coach Murray Lawrence. "I'll be checking with the Oilers later today to see what's happening."

After Lakers 3-2 overtime loss to Shuswap Totems, Sunday, more players have been filing in to camp.

Mike Enemark, Ron Berezowski and Brad Anderson have been practicing with the Lakers this week.

Enemark is a lefthanded shooting defenceman who played with Quesnel in the Peace Cariboo League last season. With Quesnel he scored 40 goals and added 70 assists and was voted the league's top offensive defenceman.

In BCJHL game action, Kelowna Buckaroos scored four times in the first six minutes in building up a 5-1 first-period lead and then coasted to a 9-4 win over Shuswap Totems, the first loss for the expansion club that plays out of Salmon Arm.

In other BCJHL games, Esquimalt Buccaneers edged Cowichan Valley Capitals 5-4 and Abbotsford Flyers downed Richmond Sockeyes 8-3.

"We played very well for 15 minutes and then went to sleep," said Kelowna coach Wayne Naka. "It's nice to get the two points but we still aren't playing well yet."

Shuswap goaltender Ray Silvey was pulled after the first four Kelowna goals, but replacement Troy Hankin didn't fare much better. He allowed another first-period goal, four more in the second period and one in the third.

"When you get down five goals in this league, it's pretty hard to come back."

Rod Schulter and Don Barber each scored twice for the winners, while Peter Loch, Charlie Lind, Tom Benson, Simon Wheeldon and Enzo Caccavo added the other goals. Dave Terhun, Albert Anthony, Tom Coghlin and Brian Fuller replied for the Totems.

Mike Taylor stopped 39 shots for the Buckaroos, while Silvey and Hankin kicked out 22.

In Duncan, the Buccaneers scored three goals in just over two minutes mid-way through the final period to break a 2-2 tie and earn their first win of the season. Two of the goals came six seconds apart.

Darrell Pederson, with two goals, Alton Davis, Len Evans and Rob Kivell scored for Esquimalt. James McKee, with two, Dean Heyes and Shawn Magurny tallied for Cowichan.

Karl Landry was outstanding in the Esquimalt goal, turning aside 46 shots, while Terry Burton kicked out 41 for the Capitals.

In Richmond, Bill Shibicky scored two goals and added three assists to pace Abbotsford past Richmond.

Randy Douville, Ralph Vos, Kelvin Boyle, Doug McFaul, Dave Moree and Dwight Mathiasen added singles for Abbotsford, which carried a 5-3 lead into the final period.

Gary McBain, Eric Cachtale and Steve Baker scored for the Sockeyes.

Richmond netminder Ken Kinney stopped 38 shots, while Abbotsford's Glen Stone made 24 saves.