

Lawrence committed



Vernon Lakers' Head Coach Murray Lawrence expects a total commitment from his players and in return, they get a total commitment from him.

Lawrence took over Lakers this season after the club finished in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division cellar during the 1981-82 season. When he accepted the post, he said he looked at the job as a challenge . . . and he is responding to that challenge.

Lakers have won three of their first seven games and appear to be improving every outing. Their most impressive performance of the season was last Sunday when they overcame a 4-3 deficit to defeat first place Kelowna Buckaroos 7-4.

"We're not going to run away with the league," Lawrence said, "but we're off to a pretty good start. I think it is realistic for us to win 30 games (56-game schedule) this season."

COLONEL BIC

Vancouver Canucks' Coach Roger Neilson has been nicknamed Captain Video because of his use of videotape . . . Lawrence should be called Colonel Bic because of his use of notes.

He has notes and statistics on every facet of the game. About the only thing he can't tell you is how many cavities a player had at his last dental check-up . . . and he's working on that.

"A player doesn't have to score goals or get assists to have a good game," Lawrence said. "I want to know how many hits, brush-offs, and bad passes he had. And in the long haul, I think plus-minus can give you a good indication who is working on the ice."

24 PLAYERS

The rookie coach will need all the help he can get because he has some

tough decisions ahead. Lakers currently have 24 players on the roster and he wants to reduce that number to 21 before their next game, Oct. 22, against Burnaby Bluehawks.

"We're going to have to cut a couple good hockey players," he said. "With the arrival of (Ed) Palachuk, we've got no choice . . . somebody has to go."

Palachuk played the first six games of the Western Hockey League season with Kamloops Oilers. The 180-pound defenceman is expected to join Lakers this week.

Lawrence said, "I felt we needed one more solid defenceman because we were giving up too many goals and I think Palachuk can do the job for us."

TOUGH DECISIONS

Lawrence's decisions may get even tougher if more player help arrives, as is anticipated. Three BCJHL teams owe players to Lakers in exchange for personnel who played in Vernon last year. Penticton Knights now have Darcy Lepine, Derek Waters is playing for Richmond Sockeyes, and Dale Reimer signed with Kelowna Buckaroos.

In addition, forward Heimo Brandstetter is still with Kelowna Wings, but may end up back with Lakers if he is cut. And Kamloops Oilers, who have stocked the Vernon club with some key personnel, may dispatch another one or two players to Lakers.

"I'm confident we'll keep improving," Lawrence said. "Our guys are playing the basic system well . . . now we're going to start concentrating more on offence. We're to the point now that anyone coming in for a tryout is going to have to take a job away from somebody who is here."

The Lakers were impressive last Sunday and if they continue to play that type of hockey, we could be in for an enjoyable winter at the Civic Arena.