

Lakers upset champions

By GORD SMILEY
Daily News Sports

When asked if he thinks he has the number one hockey club in the B.C. Junior Hockey League, Murray Lawrence smiles and nods his head.

Lawrence, coach of the Vernon Lakers, has plenty of reason to believe his charges are the team to beat in the B.C. JHL.

TWO WINS

Lakers handed the defending B.C. champion Penticton Knights back-to-back 6-3 losses over the weekend. The second game was played Sunday, in front of 550 enthusiastic fans, at the Civic Arena.

In other league play Sunday, Abbotsford Flyers downed Shuswap Totems 6-3, Merritt Centennials upset Kelowna Buckaroos 8-3, and Langley Eagles edged New Westminster Royals 3-2.

On Saturday, Cowichan Valley Capitals beat Richmond Sockeyes 6-3, Kelowna blanked Shuswap 5-0, and Abbotsford defeated Revelstoke Rockets 9-5.

Lakers record now sits at 10-6, just two points behind league leading Knights at 11-4.

The win Sunday by Lakers also better the total number of victories compiled during the entire 1981-82 season, nine. To say the team has done an about face could be considered an understatement, winning their last six of eight games. Those eight games have been played in just 11 days, with a three-game Coast road trip staring them in the face next weekend.

"The boys have been playing a lot of hockey lately," said Lawrence. "They deserve everything they've done so far, I'm really proud of them."

COSTLY PENALTY

Lakers used their quickness and playmaking ability to topple the much larger Knights, whose aggressiveness cost them dearly in the third period.

At the 20:00 minute mark of the second period Daryl Craft received a five minute high sticking major, plus a two minute minor penalty for trying to implant the brand name of his stick on the forehead of Rob Kossan.

Ed Palachuk and Nick Kapicki scored during the major penalty, then nine seconds after Kapicki sneaked one by the post, linemate Kevin Thorlakson won the race to the puck against Knights

goaltender Norm Foster and made the score 6-2. Brett Hull rounded out scoring for Penticton with less than four minutes remaining in the game.

Also scoring for Lakers were Stacy Wakabayashi, Kossan and Gord Simpson. Knights other goalscorers were Ian Kidd, and Derrick Ruppel.

56 SAVES

Rex Grant blocked 35 shots for Lakers while Foster blocked 56 for Knights.

Wakabayashi's goal, the first of the game, also came on a power play and Lawrence said with his power play, teams can't afford to take penalties against Lakers.

"The boys really set-up and move the puck around," said Lawrence. "We're also getting a lot of shots on net, we feel if you shoot enough, it has to go in."

Lawrence was also using big defenceman Rudy Poeschek as a screen in front of the net on the power play.

"It's just something we like to throw at them, it just mixes things up a bit," said Lawrence.

Lawrence also switched around two of his lines with Kossan centreing Brent Doucette and Wakabayashi while Simpson centres Glen Doucette and Todd Ewen. The "scooter" line stayed intact with Kapicki between Thorlakson and Greg Kowal.

The defensive pairing of Mike Enemark and Gavin Shuya played their usual 50 minutes and didn't show any ill effects from playing their eighth game in 11 days.

"Our guys didn't look tired, but they were," said Lawrence. "They just keep going and never quit, they have a lot of infestinal fortitude, a hell of a lot more than Penticton has, I'll tell you that."

SCORED TWO

On Saturday, Lakers were paced by the two-goal performance of Simpson, who finished the night with four points.

Also scoring were Enemark, the Doucette brothers and Kossan. Scoring for Penticton were Ruppel, Ally Cook and Hull.

Next game for Lakers is Friday when they're in Langley to take on the Eagles. They travel to Cowichan, Saturday, and Esquimalt, Sunday. Next home game is Nov. 16 when Lakers again host Penticton.



VERNON LAKERS' forward Todd Ewen, right, meets head on with Dean Paprotaka in front of Penticton Knights' goaltender Norm Foster during first period action

between Knights and Lakers Sunday night at the Civic Arena. Lakers went on to win the contest 6-3.

(Daily News Photo)