

Another roller coaster

By MIKE CONDON
(Sports Editor)

The old song has it that "Two out of three ain't bad" but it misses the next line - "If you win the two."

The roller coaster ride that has been the Kelowna Buckaroos' season so far hit more rises and dips during the past weekend as the Bucks lost a heartbreaker, took one convincing win and then threw in the towel in the third game.

The weekend results left the BCJHL's Interior Division slightly clearer in the race for first place although anything still can, and probably will happen, before the regular season closes on Mar. 6.

The Bucks played two good periods in Penticton Friday only to give up a tying goal inside the final 12 seconds and then lose the game on a defensive lapse 10 seconds into overtime.

They had shown a great deal of character in the third period to pull ahead after trailing 4-2 with less than seven minutes to go.

Simon Wheeldon and Derrick Ruppel traded goals in the first period, Kelly Para and Shawn Pettyjohn did the same 55 seconds apart in the second only for Brett Hull to give the Knights the lead again at 15:31.

When Dan Gerarden scored at 2:50 of the third and the Knights, although being pinned in their own zone for much of the time, kept the Bucks at bay, it looked as if the game was going to fizzle out.

It was during this ever increasing pressure that the line of Marcel Raby, Scott Shoffstall and Enzo Caccavo began to force the Knights into mistakes with some ferocious forechecking.

From a face off in the Penticton zone, Caccavo collared a loose puck and picked the far corner to close the score to 4-3.

This came at 13:43 and little more than two minutes later the Bucks were level as Jeff Armitage got his stick on the puck in front of goal. 15 seconds later the turnaround was almost complete as Shoffstall set Caccavo in free and the winger deked Foster to score under the crossbar.

Caccavo is not the most popular player in Penticton so his celebration in front of the Knights' bench wasn't too well received.

It looked as if referee Eric Ausman wanted overtime as he penalized Misko Antisn at 17:37 on a borderline call but the Bucks killed off the short handed threat only to have a defensive mistake set up the Knights for a three on one that Steve Charbonneau converted with time running out.

The Bucks didn't even have time to get warm in overtime as Gerarden fought off a half

hearted check along the boards and set up Rick Boh who had no trouble beating Randy Kirby for the winner.

There were some ugly scenes on the ice as the teams made their way to the dressing rooms, Caccavo having to be restrained by Dale Reimer from going after Knights' coach Rick Kozuback.

"He was calling our players some really foul names as they were going off, there's no need for that when you've won the game," said Caccavo.

The following night the Bucks put that disappointment behind them as they finally broke a home losing streak to the Lakers with the kind of solid performance they will need if the two teams should meet in the play offs later this year.

The first period was almost a non event with Ken McKenzie giving the Lakers the lead at 12:21 and Shoffstall tying the game at the 15 minute mark.

The second was far more entertaining with the Bucks starting to hit and the Lakers showing that they weren't happy with that kind of game.

With the goalposts and Rex Grant getting in the way of many shots the Bucks were feeling frustrated that their only reward was a blistering shot from Caccavo that whipped through Grant's pads at 8:15.

The Bucks were further stymied in their attempts to get some momentum by indifferent refereeing that left them short handed three times, the third costing them as the Lakers' power play, almost anaemic throughout the game, clicked with 42 seconds left in the period.

That could have been the lift the Lakers needed for the third but with Kirby in fine form at the back, the forwards started the relentless forechecking that had disturbed the Knights the previous evening.

Goals had to come and once Shawn Pettyjohn had cracked the rearguard at 10:37 the Raby, Shoffstall and Caccavo line moved into top gear and popped in two more inside two minutes, Caccavo making it 4-2 at 13:23 and then Raby converting Caccavo's behind the net pass at 15:19.

The Bucks outshot the Lakers 35-24.

The following night in Vernon the Bucks got off to a good start

with Shoffstall opening the scoring after 3:09 but from then on it was all downhill as the Bucks defence became non existant.

The Lakers scored seven unanswered goals between the four minute mark and the end of the second period and must have left the ice thinking that Santa Claus had paid a late visit to the arena.

"The dots on the ice did a better job than our defence," said a beleaguered Kirby after the game. "I've never seen so many three on ones and four on twos."

In addition to failing to take the man out, the Bucks also proved to be over generous in

gifts as they came.

The race was further confused Saturday as the Shuswap Totems went into Penticton and won 6-4 to give them six wins out of eight against the Knights this season, a record that may leave the Knights unwilling to press too hard for first place and the resultant seven game series with the certain to finish in fourth place Totems.

This coming weekend sees more crucial match ups in the race for first place.

On Friday the Lakers go into Penticton and then Saturday the hottest rivalry in junior hockey resumes as the Knights move into Memorial Arena for a



Enzo Caccavo shows how it feels to score in Penticton

passing the puck, finding white sweaters far more often than they were able to connect with players wearing red ones.

When Rod Schluter was tripped at centre ice, allowing Bob Wensley to skate in unmolested for the fifth goal, the heads sagged.

They did recover some self respect in the third by shutting down the Lakers and scoring three goals themselves but by then the game had become a meaningless exercise.

Had the team played with half the spirit it showed Saturday then the result could have been so much different because the Lakers showed little imagination. They didn't have to, all they had to do was accept the

game with the Bucks.

On Sunday the Knights continue their travels, heading into Vernon for a return game with the Lakers. The following Tuesday the Bucks go to Vernon once more.

BUCK-SHOT The Bucks have lost winger Don Barber for seven to 10 days with a partially separated shoulder he received in Saturday's game. He should be back in uniform for the Bucks' game in Vernon next week...an unconfirmed report from the coast has the Knights being penalized two points for playing an ineligible player in a game several weeks ago...the line of Shoffstall, Raby and Caccavo was the most successful for the Bucks this past weekend, clicking for 18 points in the three games.

Lift for Lakers on Island

A visit to Vancouver Island was coach Brock Tully's hope of adding the Okanagan College

