

Lakers regain first place in BCJHL Interior Division

By JIM JUDD

Daily News Sports

Gavin Shuya's insurance marker, into an empty net, gave Vernon Lakers a 4-2 victory over the visiting Kelowna Buckaroos Tuesday night at the Civic arena and moved the local club back into sole possession of first place in the BCJHL Interior Division.

Lakers currently lead both Kelowna, and the idle Penticton Knights by a single point with one game still in hand on the Knights.

Despite a style of play described as sloppy, by coach Murray Lawrence, Lakers went out in front of the Bucks 3-0 and held the lead until the final five minutes of the third period. A pair of quick goals by Kelowna's Scott Shoffstall spoiled a hard-fought shutout bid by Lakers' goaltender Rex Grant.

"We were trying some new combinations tonight in our defence and offence so we were a bit sloppy in our own end at times," said Murray Lawrence of his team's effort. "I think we wanted it a little bit more, though!"

Lakers battled their way through a very tough first period that saw more defensive errors and giveaways on their behalf than they have produced yet this season. Lakers' power-play, normally in the awesome range, went 0 for 4 in the first period alone, and was 0 for 7 on the night.

The brightest light of the first stanza came when Stacey Wakabayashi gave the Lakers a 1-0 lead at 5:31.

Using a defenceman for a screen on his first shot, Wakabayashi quickly followed up and banged in his own rebound.

Lakers got a spark of life in their system in the second period following a goal at 7:35 by temporary captain Greg Kowal.

The play began with Kevin Thorlakson's rush down the left side. Thorlakson centred the puck from deep in the corner to Kowal, waiting in the slot immediately in front of Buckaroo goaltender Randy Kirby. Kowal redirected the shot into the Kelowna net in one motion to give Lakers a 2-0 lead.

"There was definitely a turnaround in the team's play when Greg (Kowal) scored his goal... it really gave us a shot in the arm," said Lawrence.

Kirby robbed Wakabayashi on a breakaway later in the period while Rex Grant, with an equally brilliant save, robbed Buckaroos' Rod Schluter from point-blank range. The period ended with Lakers in front 2-0.

Glen Doucette showed a bit of his former style as he

extended the Laker lead to 3-0 early in the third frame. Taking a centering pass from Ken Fenton, Doucette lifted a high wrist-shot over the shoulder of Kirby.

Shoffstall scored his first marker at the 15 minute mark of the third stanza and followed up with an almost identical marker, on a power-play situation, just over one minute later.

Shuya countered Buckaroos' attempt at evening the score with an extra attacker by putting

the puck into Kelowna's empty net.

Elsewhere in BCJHL action Tuesday night, Richmond Sockeyes stopped Cowichan Valley Capitals 8-3, Abbotsford Flyers beat Burnaby Bluehawks 5-1, and Nanaimo Clippers downed Langley Eagles 5-3.

Lakers follow up Tuesday's action with a game in Revelstoke Thursday, then entertain the much-improved Merritt Centennials Friday at the Civic arena.



LAKERS' Gavin Shuya (24) rifles a wrist-shot into the empty net to put the icing on a 4-2 Laker victory over Kelowna Buckaroos Tuesday night at the Civic arena.

Buckaroo defenceman Dal Reimer (6) dives to try and prevent the goal while Rob Kossan (5) who made the pass to Shuya, looks on in pleasure. Lakers

regained number one spot in the Interior Division with their victory.

(Daily News Photo)