

BREAK TIE IN THIRD

Brother act helps Lakers to earn win over Merritt

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

A pair of deuces was a pretty big hand for Vernon Lakers Friday night at the Civic arena.

Back-to-back goals just 15 seconds apart by Brent Doucette, both set up by brother Glen Doucette, broke open a 1-1 deadlock and lifted the Lakers to a 4-2 victory over Merritt Centennials.

The win keeps Vernon three points ahead of Kelowna and Penticton for first place in the BCJHL Interior Division. Both second-place clubs won their respective games Friday night as well.

Doucette's quick goals were overshadowed by the tireless and outstanding performance of his younger brother whose puck-control and leadership gave the local club just what they needed to win the game. Laker coach Murray Lawrence was ecstatic with Glen's return to his former style.

"I'm really happy to have Glen (Doucette) getting back into form, that'll sure go a long way toward helping us. He was great tonight ... and you haven't seen anything yet!"

Lakers opened the scoring at 12:15 when another strong performer for the local club, Rob Kossan, put in a rebound off Stacey Wakabayashi's solo effort. Wakabayashi beat the Merritt defence on the outside, cut to the centre and tried to jammed the puck through the pads of Centennials' Mark Taylor. Taylor, outstanding during the evening, stopping 48 of 52 Laker shots, made the save on Wakabayashi but Kossan was right behind to flip in the rebound.

Centennials' Pat Seeley even the score at 17:24 when his shot from the point was deflected off a

Laker defenceman's stick during a power-play opportunity.

Taylor turned in an splendid performance during a scoreless second frame as Lakers outshot Merritt 23-6 but failed to put anything by the young goaltender.

At 2:58 of the third stanza, the Doucette brothers swung into action to break the game open. Glen fed his older brother in the slot

from behind the net and with the entire open net to shoot at, the older Doucette made no mistake.

At 3:13, on an almost identical play, the Doucette's combined to make the score 3-1 Lakers.

Between the pair of quick goals, Lakers' Todd Ewen and Centennial's Brent Demerai's battled to a draw in the Merritt end of the arena.

Stacey Wakabayashi scored at 9:51 to give Vernon a 4-1 lead.

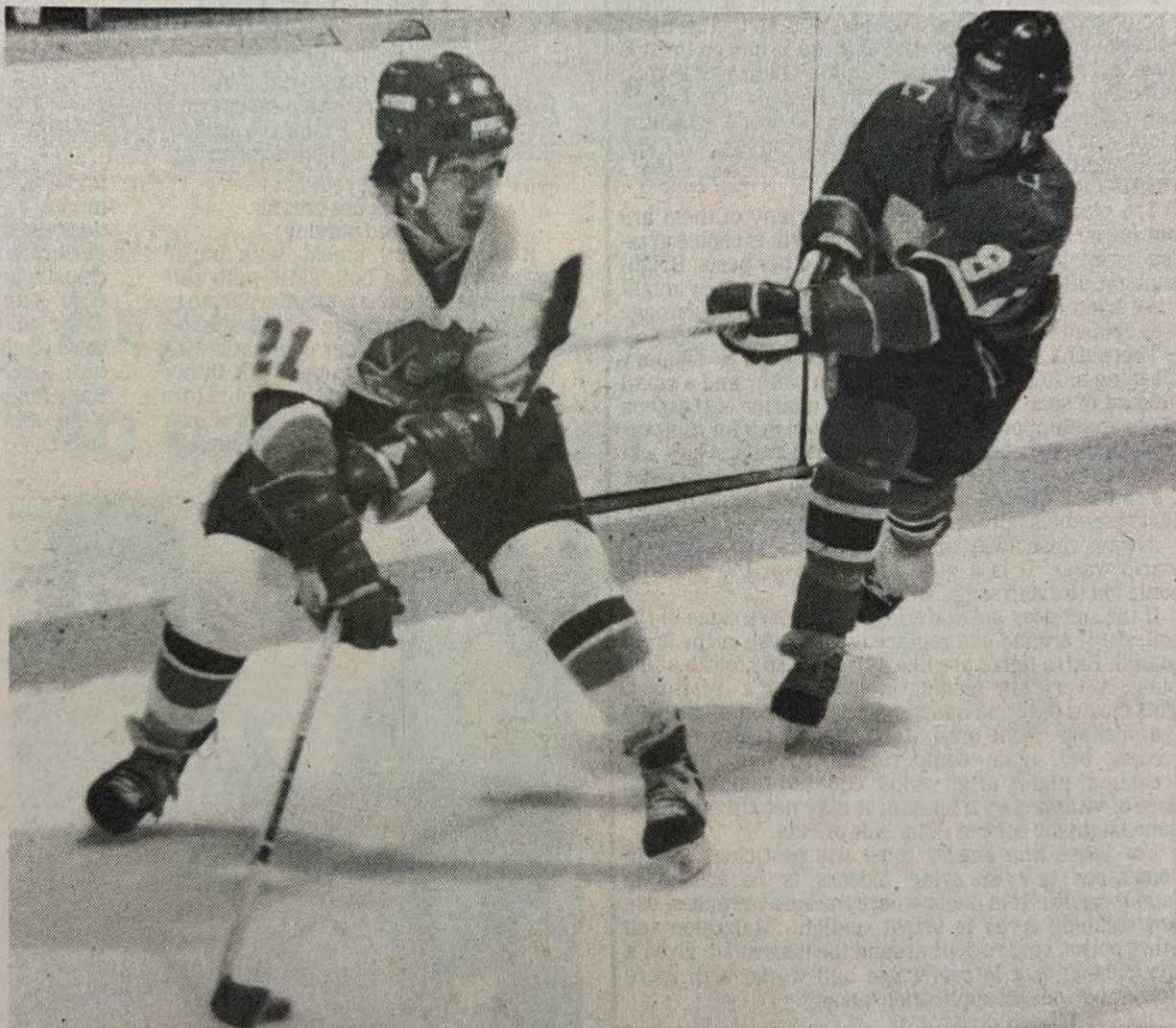
This time Kossan set up the play with a blistering drive from the top of the face-off circle with Wakabayashi there to scoop in the rebound.

Tim O'Toole's power-play tally at 14:25 rounded out the scoring for the evening.

A hush fell on the crowd with 54 seconds remaining

when Lakers' all-star defenceman Mike Enemark went down heavily after a play in the Vernon zone. Luckily the slight injury to Enemark's knee was not serious and an ice-pack and some rest should see him back in the lineup tonight when Lakers travel to Penticton.

Nevertheless, the effect was devastating for Lawrence, who's plagued by injuries.



LAKERS' Stacey Wakabayashi (21) fends off a check by Merritt's Brent Demerai as he looks for someone in the slot to pass to. Wakabayashi scored his 35th

goal of the season and set up another by Rob Kossan as the local squad doubled the Centennials 4-2 Friday night at the Civic Arena. The win kept Lakers

three points in front of Kelowna and Penticton for first place in the BCJHL Interior Division.

(Jeff Brandt Photo)