

KENDALL'S KORNER

Hockey fever hits Vernon



Hockey playoff fever has hit Vernon! Vernon Lakers host Penticton Knights, tonight, in the opening game of the Interior Division semi-finals.

It has been seven years since Vernon was a serious threat to win the Interior title (1976), and 11 years (1972) since Vernon Essos brought the B.C. championship to the North Okanagan.

Lakers face a formidable foe in Penticton, the defending provincial champion. Vernon placed second in the division, three points ahead of third-place Knights. However, Penticton won six of eight games between the two clubs.

Like the old saying goes, "Playoffs are a new season," and everyone in Vernon is ready. A crowd estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000 was in the rink last Sunday to watch Kelowna Buckaroos whip Lakers 8-3 and take top spot in the division.

EUROPEAN STYLE

Large crowds are also expected tonight and Wednesday, when Lakers host the second game.

Lakers, unlike their predecessors in recent years, would rather play hockey than clutch, grab, and fight. Their fast-skating and clean style has prompted comparisons to European hockey.

One long-time critic, who has been attending junior games locally for

more than a decade, said he likes this team. "They don't go looking for fights," he said. "They come to play."

In fact, it is a lack of physical play by Vernon that makes Penticton a slight favorite in the series. Knights have one of the largest, and most physical teams, in the BCJHL. And although Penticton Coach Rick Kozuback said he doesn't expect a rough series, Knights are certain to use their superior size to intimidate Lakers.

If the intimidation doesn't work and Penticton's physical play results in powerplay opportunities for Lakers, Vernon could win the series.

ENJOYABLE HOCKEY

One thing is certain... Lakers have provided us with entertaining hockey this winter. Thanks to players like Stacey Wakabayashi, Mike Enemark, Gavin Shuya, and Rex Grant, who have reminded us how enjoyable junior hockey can be. And a special debt is owed to Vernon Coach Murray Lawrence who has molded a group of cast-offs into a fine team.

Lawrence said, "I think we can beat Penticton. I know it would give our guys a real lift to have a large, loud crowd on hand tonight."

Here is your chance Vernon... we've been waiting a long time for a winner in junior hockey!

GRUELLING SCHEDULE

Lakers host playoff opener

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The outcome of the BCJHL Interior Division semi-final series between Vernon Lakers and Penticton Knights will probably be decided by one factor more than any other... stamina.

Whichever of the two teams has the strength to last through the rigid scheduling for the series will likely be the victor.

Lakers and Knights open their series tonight at the Civic Arena, play Wednesday here as well, then go at again Thursday and Friday in Penticton before returning to Vernon for game five, Sunday night.

In two words, Lakers' Coach Murray Lawrence summed up the scheduling of this crucial series.

"It's ridiculous," said Lawrence.

No doubt Penticton coach Rick Kozuback agrees with Lawrence's sentiments.

Despite a dismal 2-6 regular season record against the Knights, Lakers feel confident they can get by their South Okanagan rivals.

Knights are certainly not the powerhouse that breezed through the BCJHL last season, but is still a tough outfit to contend with. On the other hand, Vernon Lakers is not the terrible team it was one season ago.

SUSPECT DEFENCE

According to Kelowna Buckaroos' coach Wayne Naka, following Kelowna's 8-3 victory over the Lakers Sunday night, Knights' defence is "somewhat suspect."

Naka's comments were based, primarily, on the outcome of the game between Penticton and Kelowna,

Saturday, in which the Bucks romped to an easy 9-4 win.

Murray Lawrence sees the Penticton defence in a different light of day.

"They (Penticton defence) don't seem as mobile as some of the other defences in the league, but with guys like Darcy Lepine, who I consider one of the best in the league, they can hold their own."

With only a single practice before the series commences, Lawrence will have to muster all his hockey knowledge to defeat a team that has dominated his squad this season.

SIMILAR STYLE

"Penticton's style, in some ways, is very similar to Kelowna," said Lawrence. "However, they aren't as strong up the middle as the Buckaroos."

"Basically we're going to forecheck aggressively, play the man and shoot a lot more... especially on the net."

After Sunday night's loss, Lawrence was optimistic about their chances with Penticton.

"I think we'll do well against Penticton... we've got the home-ice advantage."

Similarly, Kozuback feels the Knights-Lakers series will be a good one.

"We'll have a good series... we've had good games with Vernon," Kozuback said. "The teams are very equal and we'll be looking at a long series."

"We realize Vernon is well-coached and they're a big improvement this season."

PLAYER HURT

Coming into this series Knights will be without one player, Murray Winnicki, who is sidelined for the dura-

tion of the season with a separated shoulder.

In addition, left winger Marty Volcan will miss the opening game due to a suspension he received for his part in a fight in Merritt, Sunday.

At this point, Kozuback is undecided about who he'll start in goal tonight.

Lawrence will also be looking to nullify the actions of a few key players on the Penticton lineup, most notably Knights' top scorer Brett Hull.

Hull, son of former NHL super-star Bobby Hull, finished the year in the top five scorers in the league. The hard-shooting winger amassed a total of 104 points, with 45 of those coming since the all-star break.

"We'll put our checking line on Hull's line... Brett's got a helluva shot so we don't want him using it too often," said Lawrence.

Another man Lakers will be keying on is Derrick Rupel, a player whom Lawrence says, "usually comes up big at playoff time."

Game time is 8 p.m.

VERNON TOP SCORERS

Player	GP	W	A	Pts	Pim
Stacey Wakabayashi	42	38	39	77	6
Mike Enemark	53	30	44	74	36
Rob Kossan	55	32	35	67	57
Gavin Shuya	53	23	33	56	168
Gord Simpson	46	20	36	56	99
Nick Kapicki	49	14	29	43	63
Glen Doucette	37	15	17	32	53
Brent Doucette	55	13	19	32	32
Ron Berzowski	41	13	15	28	170
Todd Ewen	41	14	10	24	170
Kevin Thorlakson	51	10	13	23	111
Greg Kowal	40	7	12	19	14
Ken McKenzie	46	5	14	19	42
Bob Wensley	18	11	7	18	74



Hughes leads

BCJHL

VANCOUVER (CP) — Statistics released Monday by the B.C. Junior Hockey League:

Standings:

Coastal Division

	W	L	T	Pts.
Abbotsford	49	6	1	99
New West	41	14	1	83
Nanaimo	30	25	1	61
Burnaby	29	25	2	60
Richmond	21	33	2	44
Langley	18	37	1	37
Cowichan	17	38	1	35

Interior Division

Kelowna	35	19	2	72
Vernon	35	20	1	71
Penticton	34	22	0	68
Salmon Arm	26	29	1	53
Revelstoke	12	43	1	25
Merritt	10	46	0	20

Scoring

	G	A	P
Shibicky, Abb	72	90	162
Ronning, New West	83	68	151
Vos, Abb	39	100	139
Mathiasen, Abb	50	73	123
Nottingham, New West	47	58	105
Hull, Pen	48	56	104
Graham, Burn	43	52	95
Evans, Nan	28	58	86
Caccavo, Kel	35	45	80
Ruppel, Pen	30	48	78

Goaltending	G	GA	Avg.
Taylor, Kel	10	22	2.24
Buker, Abb	17	52	3.31
Grant, Vern	22	69	3.49
Bradley, Abb	33	113	3.54
Jeffrey, Pen	25	84	3.60
Roach, New West	33	110	3.69
Kirby, Kel	25	93	3.78