

VERNON 5, PENTICTON 3

Lakers win series opener



LAKERS' defensive game was in top form Tuesday night as the local team checked Pentiction Knights to a standstill en route to a 5-3 victory that gave them a

1-0 lead in their best-of-seven, semi-final, Interior Division series. Above, Lakers' Rob Kossan (5) checks Knights Calvin Boyle (4) while Gord

Simpson (12) takes Darryl Cust (5) into the boards in the offensive zone. Knights didn't get a good scoring opportunity in the last seven minutes of the game.

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The jinx has ended!

Rob Kossan's power-play goal at 6:16 of the third period proved to be the winner while defenceman Ken MacKenzie's empty-net marker at 19:52 put the icing on Vernon Lakers' 5-3 victory over visiting Pentiction Knights Tuesday night.

Lakers, who took a 1-0 lead in their best-of-seven BCJHL Interior Division semi-final series, snapped a six-game losing streak against the Knights.

However, it took Bob Wensley's goal at 15:10 of the first period to even the score at 1-1 and turn the game around for Vernon.

"We were a little tight at first but Bobby's goal settled us down and turned things around for us," said Lakers' Coach Murray Lawrence.

Wensley, who had picked up a pass in the neutral zone, raced straight up centre ice, split the defence and rifled a hard, fast boomer over the shoulder of Knights' goaltender Norm Foster.

OPENED SCORING

Knights had opened the scoring at 1:33 when Mark Verigin, alone in the slot in front of Matt Sekela, converted Brett Hull's centering pass into a 1-0 lead.

Sekela, who appeared shaky at the outset, settled down and played well which enabled Lakers to earn their hard-fought victory.

"I haven't had too much playoff experience... like about two games last season," said the lanky, blonde net-minder. "Once I got a few saves behind me, I settled right down."

Lakers looked much the same way they had on the previous six encounters with Pentiction, during the first 15 minutes, allowing the Knights to free-wheel about the ice and take the game to the Vernon squad.

There was definitely a turnaround when Wensley, the veteran, scored. Lakers turned into a hard-hitting, fast-skating club once again.

"The turnaround was definitely Wensley's goal," said Lawrence once more. "From that point on we took right over. We're going to go right into Pentiction and beat them there too," he added.

SHORT-HANDED

Lakers started the second period with another uplifting experience in captain Gord Simpson's short-handed tally at 7:43.

Simpson picked up Gavin Shuya's clearing pass off the boards, went in on a breakaway and calmly picked a top corner with a hard wrist shot.

Shuya opened the scoring in the Lakers' lead with his goal at 11:21, a rifle-like blast from the top of the face-off circle.

Hull pulled Knights within a goal again at 19:19 of the second frame during a scramble in front of the Lakers' net.

Vernon scored another big goal at 6:16 of the third frame with Kossan's power-play marker that put the local squad up 4-2. Kossan picked up his own rebound, skated around Foster and dumped the puck into the corner of the net.

Pentiction closed the gap once again at 10:18 when the puck went into the Lakers' net off the skate of Knights' Derek Ruppel. Referee Ron Renneberg ruled the disc was not intentionally kicked in.

Knights' momentum never had a chance to build up steam as Lakers checked them into the ice in the final minutes of the game. Rather than let Pentiction try for the tying goal, Lakers missed half a dozen golden opportunities in the final six minutes while taking the offensive. Pentiction didn't get a decent scoring opportunity in the last seven minutes.

MacKenzie finally found the open net after Dan Baker, Rob Kossan and Bob Wensley had missed chances.

Lakers outshot Knights 48-40 while taking just five of the game's 13 minor penalties.

TRIO HURT

The win was costly in terms of manpower for Lakers who, although not losing any players, will have three of their top puck-carriers weakened for some games to come.

Stacey Wakabayashi suffered a charleyhorse in the first period, but came back to see limited action. Brent Doucette re-injured his nagging separated shoulder and defenceman Mike Enemark did the same.

All three will return to the lineup for tonight's game, in Pentiction, though the extent of their service will have to be limited to avoid further complications.

Centre Nick Kapicki will be back in the lineup this weekend.

Game two of the series goes back to Pentiction tonight while game three will unfold in the Civic Arena, Thursday evening.

In other BCJHL playoff action Tuesday night, Kelowna staved off a late rally to defeat Salmon Arm Shuswap Totems 6-4 and take a 1-0 lead in that Interior Division semi-final matchup. Nanaimo Clippers edged New Westminster 3-2, on the Coast.

KENDALL'S KORNER

Williment is happy



One of the happiest men in the Vernon Civic Arena, Tuesday night, was Ray (Dick) Williment.

Williment, owner of Vernon Lakers, was all smiles after his club defeated Pentiction Knights 5-3 in the opening game of their B.C. Junior Hockey League playoff series.

Williment took over as sole owner of the club last summer after being one of 10 owners the previous season. Right now, he is enjoying every minute of it.

"My dream was to make the playoffs," Williment said, "and we came within one point of first place. Anything we do from now on is kind of a bonus."

LOST MONEY

Williment, like his predecessors for the past decade, has lost a bundle of money on junior hockey in Vernon. However, unlike those before him, he has a chance to get some, or all, of it back.

He said, "I probably need another four or five home games to break even. But, I'm not too worried about it. When I bought the team, I didn't expect to make any money. After a year like we had in 1981-82, I'm just thrilled to be where we are."

Lakers finished in the Interior Division cellar last season with just eight victories.

"Winning the first game (Tuesday) gave us a big lift," Williment said. "Pentiction has a good club and we didn't want to fall behind 1-0 in the series."

LICK WOUNDS

Lakers have to lick their wounds, get on the bus, and travel to Pentiction for tonight's second game.

Mike Enemark (shoulder), Glen Doucette (shoulder), and Stacey Wakabayashi (charleyhorse) will see only limited duty due to injuries. Nick Kapicki (broken foot) and Ken Fenton (broken leg) are still sidelined.

Williment said, "It would be nice to have everyone healthy, but we don't, so we'll have to work a little harder. Our guys have been giving 100 per cent all season... I'm sure they'll keep it up."

NO JUVENILES

To compound the injury problem, Vernon Juvenile Reps are unavailable because their team is locked in a battle with Pentiction for the Okanagan-Mainline League title. Defenceman Chris Saunders has been called up from the midget reps and other midgets may be used, depending on the injury situation.

With Enemark's duty limited to powerplays, Saunders was teamed with all-star Gavin Shuya and turned in a strong performance, Tuesday. And Shuya has probably never played better.

Hard work got Williment and Lakers to where they are... and hard work will be needed to win three more games against Pentiction.

BROTHERS AND SISTER

Skaters earn medals

Three local speed skaters were among the medal winners at this year's B.C. Indoor Speedskating Championships, in Mission, March 5 and 6.

Tim DeVries picked up the silver medal for his performance in the juvenile boys category (12-14 years) while brother Michael picked up the bronze in the same category.

Meanwhile, their sister, Ursula,

was busy winning the bronze medal in the junior girls category (15-16 years).

There was a total of 240 skaters in the championship.

Previous to moving to Vernon in November, the family belonged to the Maple Ridge Speedskating Club. Father, Gerry, is with the provincial speedskating association and is

responsible for starting and developing new clubs and his wife is a coach.

The DeVries family will be starting a speedskating club, in Vernon, next fall.

"We'll be going to schools in the fall and putting on displays in an effort to encourage interested youngsters to join our new club," said DeVries.



FORTY-THREE BX Elementary School students wait for the starter to yell 'go' prior to a race, Tuesday, on Silver Star Mountain. The race was held to conclude four weeks of cross-country training the students have received. (Bob Platt Photo)

JRNAL

Media tough on skiers

Daily News Sports
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Calgary, the Canadian
only as the "Crazy

Canucks" because of their radical approach to international competition (pure gonzo).

Since then the scene has gone like this: Read has won five more races and narrowly missed winning the overall championship crown in 1980; Podborski, of Toronto, has won six races and the World Cup Crown in 1982; Todd Brooker, of Paris, Ont., has come relatively out of nowhere to win two downhill this season and has a shot at Podborski's crown.

What have we, as Canadians, got to be ashamed of? Nothing is what! Anybody who has followed downhill racing over the years has grown to love the Canadian team.

When you stop to consider the conditions under which the Canadian team developed into World Cup contenders you have to wonder why anyone would sell the team short of heroes.

LOW ON CASH

There's never been enough cash in the kitty to finance the A team let alone develop the younger B and C Canadian teams to which the hope of the future rests.

After over-extending the budget allotted the teams this season, it was announced that most of the members of the B and C teams would have to return to Canada unless they wished to continue racing at their own expense.

Head coach Bruce Ritchie, who has brought the "Crazy Canucks" from rags to riches (figurative riches not literal) has just announced his retirement after this season while at the same time each of the members of the "A" team was tagged with a bill for \$2,065 to cover costs over budget that have been incurred.

Despite this, Canadian media members still enquire sarcastically of Read and Podborski, "What's wrong?" "Why can't you win this season?" "Is it a personal problem?"

The list of assenine questions never ends.

By contrast, media persons in the United States apparently live and die with their ski team members. During the World Cup events last Sunday, members of the announcing personnel on an American network, were determined that Phil Mahre, certainly a world-class slalom racer but out of his element in the downhill circuit, had victory in his back pocket.

Instead it was a red-headed kid from Canada, Brooker, that won the race.

Fortunately for Podborski, who has an opportunity to relax and catch up on life again without being hounded by the media, Brooker will take over as the new scapegoat.

Unfortunately for Brooker, who traversed from 61st seed last season to the top this season, his career has been labelled inconsistent... something which the Canadian press will never let him forget and something which they will fall back on each time he fails to produce the desired results in future racing seasons.

UNDER GUN

Ritchie's reasons for leaving the team, namely to become a respected husband and father, will come under the gun for a long time to come as well, of that you can be sure.

After all these people aren't supposed to be real flesh and blood, they have no feelings, no emotions, and they certainly aren't suppose to have the human weaknesses that allow them to become injured.

As for the Canadian Ski Association, I'm sure it took its financial troubles to the people, they'd find that Canadians don't sell out their emotions so fast that they wouldn't be willing to raise whatever money is required to keep our team aloft.

Better yet, they could approach the Canadian media and ask them to put their money where their mouth is.

