

Local players help Flyers reach B.C. championships

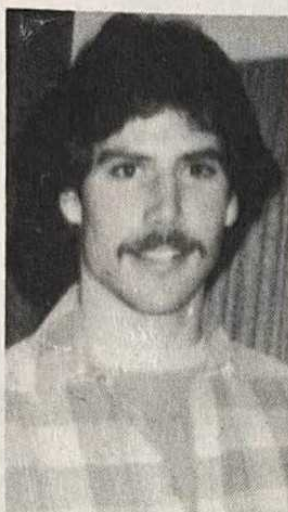
By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Vernon Lakers sang their swan song three weeks ago but there are still junior hockey players from this city hard at work.

Kevin Poirier and Joe Leschuk are members of Abbotsford Flyers. Flyers are just one brief series away from becoming the provincial junior hockey champions. Earlier this week, the Abbotsford crew sidelined Kelowna Buckaroos to become the new B.C. Junior Hockey League champions.

Friday, Flyers face Williams Lake Mustangs, champions of the Peace-Cariboo Junior Hockey League. The best-of-three matchup will decide who goes on to face the Alberta champs, and from there on to the Abbott Cup final, then the Centennial Cup.

One of the two Vernon players, Poirier, will be able to complete his junior hockey season with a clear mind and a conscience that is at ease. Poirier, offered a full athletic scholarship from International University Gulls in San Diego, California, only Wednesday had his offer confirmed, opening up a paved road to both higher education and a possible future in hockey.



KEVIN POIRIER
... scholarship

"Coach Ron Ingram phoned me yesterday and confirmed their offer of a scholarship," said Poirier. "He's sending the necessary papers for me to sign."

Normally a U.S. university athletic scholarship last a full four years, but since Poirier is now a 20-year old, the offer will last for only three years. His fourth and final year would have to be financed by his own means.

Poirier was scouted during his regular season play with the Flyers, a team he played just 35 games with

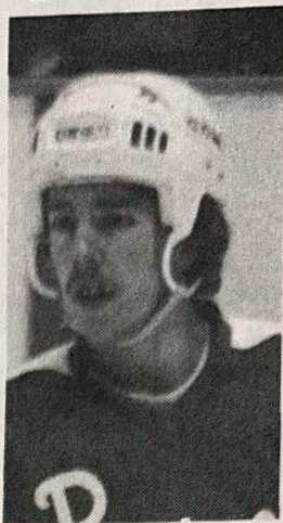
because of an injury earlier in the season. He still managed to amass 30 goals and 35 assists in those 35 games.

"The assistant coach from San Diego was in Abbotsford several times this year and he's the one responsible for scouting me," added Poirier.

With his future secure, Poirier, and Leschuk, can concentrate on the business at hand... helping Flyers get to the Centennial Cup, emblematic of Tier II junior hockey supremacy in this country.

Lexchuk, like his friend Poirier, got his start in the minor hockey system in Vernon. Both players helped Vernon Coca-Cola Juvenile Reps to the Western Canada title in 1980 before turning to junior careers.

While Poirier toiled one season with Vernon Lakers before a season in senior hockey and finally Abbotsford, Leschuk has remained on the junior hockey path since his juvenile days. After a brief stint with Seattle Breakers, of the Western Hockey League, Leschuk spent a season and a half with New Westminster Royals. It was only after



JOE LESCHUK
... defenceman

the all-star break and following a 12-game suspension handed down by the league that the local defenceman was able to switch his allegiance to Abbotsford Flyers for the second half of the season. He has been a two-time all-star defenceman in the BCJHL.

Poirier said, "Joe's really helped us out... he's really straightened out our defence."

Both players feel the pressure on them to perform in post-season since the winning season they

put together with the Flyers this year.

"With the season we've had we started looking forward to the Centennial Cup some time ago," said Leschuk. "The talk around Abbotsford is that it's expected we win it all."

If the teams the Flyers meet in the near future provide no more competition than they've experienced to date, it could be smooth sailing right to the national final. Flyers downed Burnaby Bluehawks in the opening round before disposing of New Westminster and finally Kelowna.

"We basically outplayed Kelowna... I thought we would have a tougher series than they showed us. We were really up for that series," said Leschuk.

Despite their easy victories to date, there's no way either of the Vernon players, or the rest of the Abbotsford team, is going to let it go to their heads. "Basically we don't want to be over-confident," said Poirier, referring to their pending mini-series with the Peace-Cariboo champions... generally considered to be a weak-sister league of the BCJHL and who have yet been to defeat a BCJHL team in playoffs.

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Editor—DON KENDALL

SPORTS BRIEFS

Local team wins tourney

Coldstream Hotel Carlings, of Vernon, blasted Trail 7-2 in the championship game of the recent Pacific Northwest Classic Hockey Tournament in Spokane, Wash. Carlings won four consecutive games during the tourney. Another Vernon team, Pecan Pies, placed third by blanking Spokane 9-0 in the 'B' final. Monashee Oldtimers, of Lumby, won only one game but brought home the Most Sportsmanlike Team Trophy.

Season opens

Fifty golfers participated in opening ladies' day play, Tuesday, at the Vernon Golf and Country Club. Closest to pin awards went to Karen Hassard (0-25 handicap) and Vi Harrison (26-40 handicap). Longest drive, in the 40 and over handicap category, was fired by Marie Millidge. Low net awards went to Betty Clarke,

6-2 and No. 8 Virginia Ruzici of Romania had an easy time with Yugoslavian Mima Jausovec 6-1, 6-2.

Will return

NEW YORK (AP)—Franz Beckenbauer will return to the Cosmos, the defending North American Soccer League champions, for the 1983 season.

"Franz Beckenbauer is synonymous with the word 'class,' and we're thrilled he's been persuaded to return," Neshui Ertegun, chairman of the board of the Cosmos, told a news conference Wednesday. Details of Beckenbauer's contract were not disclosed.

The 37-year-old West German left the Cosmos after spending four years with the team and leading them to league titles in 1977, 1978 and 1980.

He returned to West Germany after the 1980 season

Prolific line leads Abbotsford

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. (CP) — The most prolific-scoring trio in the B.C. Junior Hockey League has been dubbed the GAP line — goals, assists, points.

The line of centre Bill Shibicky between wingers Ralph Vos and Dwight Mathiasen was formed last fall by coach Don Berry of Abbotsford Flyers and the unit led the team to the league championship.

They combined to score 161 goals, 262 assists and 423 points in 56 regular-season games when the Flyers captured first place in the Coastal Division.

In the playoffs — Abbotsford eliminated Burnaby Bluehawks, New Westminster Royals and Interior champion Kelowna Buckaroos — the line added another 109 points in 15 games.

The GAP line takes to the ice again this weekend when Abbotsford plays host to Williams Lake Mustangs, winners of the Peace-Cariboo Junior Hockey League playoffs, for the provincial championship.

SERIES SHORT

The B.C. final begins Friday in this Fraser Valley community, with the second game of the best-of-three series Saturday and a third, if required, Sunday. The winner meets the Alberta champions in the Tier Two playoffs towards the Centennial Cup.

Shibicky is the son of Alex Shibicky, a forward with New York Rangers when the Broadway Blueshirts won their last Stanley Cup in 1940.

The slick centreman led the BCJHL in scoring this season with 162 points on 72

goals and 90 assists. Vos, the left winger, had 39 goals and 99 assists for 138 points and left winger Mathiasen had 50 goals and 73 assists for 123 points.

"We know what each other is doing and we're all the same type of players," Shibicky said this week. "We play a passing and finesse game."

"I thought we'd do pretty well, but not like this. We've got a lot more points than I thought we would. Things just seem to happen when we're on the ice."

HAS THE SMARTS

New Westminster coach Al Patterson, who led Burnaby Winter Club midgets to the Air Canada Cup one year ago, said Shibicky is one of the smartest players in the BCJHL.

"But Mathiasen is probably the most important member of the line," Patterson added. "He has good physical strength and excellent drive to the net."

"The other two pass the puck and he creates some confusion by setting himself up in front of the net. Those guys are three of the top pressure players in the league. They combine on a lot of tic-tac-toe plays."

All three plan to combine hockey with college education in the U.S. Next season Shibicky will attend Michigan State, Vos will go to Northern Michigan and Mathiasen said he's leaning toward Denver University.

Mathiasen will play against Williams Lake with a leg brace to protect a knee ligament problem which occurred against Kelowna and forced him to miss the last three games of the BCJHL final.

GUIDE REPORT