

JUDD'S JOURNAL

Two sides to a coin



By JIM JUDD Daily News Sports

Chalk up another one to experience.

They tell me you often can't see the forest for the trees and right about now I'm wondering if there's not a lot more truth in this old wives' tale than I ever dreamt possible before.

It's not the first time I've been caught between a coaching-management struggle and if there's one thing I've learned, or rather, should have learned, it's that you wait until all the punches have been thrown before you step into the situation. It doesn't matter really that you take a side in the issue just that if you do you must be resigned to the fact that the egg ends up on your face.

Case in point is the current struggle going on within the Vernon Lakers' organization.

In this business it's usually one part of the organization that you deal with and that is the coach of the team. He's the guy you talk to when the game is over. He's the guy who keeps you informed on the progress of players, the injuries, the cuts, the prospects, the new arrivals, and the state of the team in general. This is the information that has to go to the reading public and if you can't get it, your head is going to be in a sling.

GOOD TERMS

The best policy therefore, is to be on good terms with the man who's going to feed you the information. Often just keeping on friendly ground with a coach is iffy. Sometimes it's downright impossible.

With Murray Lawrence, however, it was easy as falling off a log. Lawrence has a friendly disposition and is without doubt, a most likeable person. On top of all this he was winning hockey games and as if that weren't enough in it's own right, he was relying on the speed and finesse of his players to do it and not the power of some hulking forward or the fists of a brawling squad.

His philosophy of the game was admirable and it netted results, one of which was a crowd on hand to watch the display, perhaps the most important factor of all in the sports business. Among his attributes as a coach Lawrence had imposed a system of total discipline over his players without having to use scare tactics. This had resulted in his winning their trust, admiration and respect as both a coach and friend.

In short, Lawrence was what I considered both a great coach and a great person to have to deal with on a regular basis. Above all, his dedication to his team went before anything else in his life as far as I was concerned.

However, Lawrence's sense of fair

play, unfortunately, seemed to have been saved for the arenas the BCJHL alone.

The first indication of this never hit me on the head until Tuesday morning when Gavin Shuya came into our office with some information I found to be very disquieting.

For Shuya, what had obviously been termed a successful season, had ended in frustration, disappointment and confusion for him. The lanky defenceman, only recently named as the recipient of the Interior Division's most valuable player award, had received the short end of the rope from Lawrence and his future possibilities had been drastically narrowed because of it.

AN OPTION

Shuya, who had the distinct option of playing either tier I hockey with Kamloops Oilers or tier II hockey with Lakers last season, had chosen to stick with the latter because he was promised, by Lawrence, that he would, with Lawrence's help, receive a scholarship to either a Canadian or American university.

What Lawrence knew and Shuya didn't, was that anyone who had played tier I junior hockey was ineligible for a scholarship. However, Lawrence, in an attempt to keep his talented and much-needed defenceman with the Lakers, deliberately misled Shuya into thinking he was still eligible for a scholarship if he remained at the tier II level.

On the line would be any chances of Shuya being picked up in the amateur hockey draft in June if he had chosen to play tier I with Kamloops.

One can only speculate the kind of emotional letdown suffered by Shuya when he finally realized neither option was available to him . . . but too late.

Now Lawrence is clearly at fault for this but at the same time one could argue that he was only doing this for the benefit of his team.

INDISCREET

Needless to say, it doesn't justify his indiscreet handling of a young man's future and life.

It was clearly a breach of the trust and respect which Shuya formerly held for his coach and the standards by which he gave his all during last season.

Understand, also, that for a young man as quiet and media-shy as Shuya to come forth with his story in itself is doubly condemning of Lawrence.

So, what formerly appeared to be a two-headed coin in Lawrence's favor where this entire incident between management and coach of the Lakers is concerned, suddenly sprung a tail.

And it sticks out like a sore thumb, in my mind.

TWO CANDIDATES

Lakers to name coach

By DON KENDALL

Daily News Sports Editor

Vernon Lakers' President Dick Williment hopes to name a new coach for his B.C. Junior Hockey League team within 10 days.

Murray Lawrence, who guided Lakers to a second-place finish during the 1982-83 season, was fired Monday.

Williment said, "We've got two candidates, with junior coaching experience. I'm sure either of them would do a great job for us. We should have our decision by next week."

Williment is confident the team will continue to improve despite the absence of Lawrence, who was instrumental in turning Lakers into a contender.

"With good management, coaching, and a solid nucleus of players, I feel we'll be stronger next season," Williment said.

The team president said he has no animosity towards Lawrence. "Things just didn't work out," Williment said. "For the betterment of the club, I had to make a change.

"There was a lack of com-

munication between Murray, myself, and (general manager) Vern Dye. It seemed like Murray wanted to operate the team himself . . . his way. I wasn't prepared to operate under those conditions."

Williment denied a radio report, Tuesday, that the team is for sale. "I don't know where that rumor started," he said. "I haven't talked to anyone about selling the club and I haven't received any offers."

Vernon Juvenile Rep Coach Ernie Kowal was incorrectly quoted

in Tuesday's Daily News. Kowal said, in referring to the firing, "It was a financial rumble . . . I think Lawrence needs to be paid."

Williment confirmed that he is not prepared to offer his coach a guaranteed salary.

"You can't afford to pay a coach at the tier two level," he said. "The deal we made with Murray this year was that we would cover his expenses and he would get a share of any profit. We lost money, so he didn't receive a share. I think he wanted his position with the club to become a paid job."