

Players join hockey battle

Vernon Lakers' players have sided with fired coach Murray Lawrence.

Defenceman Ken McKenzie, speaking on behalf of 13 of the 20 players on Vernon's 1982-83 roster, told the Daily News they feel Lawrence was unjustly dismissed.

Team owner Dick Williment announced the firing earlier this week, citing several problems, including disagreements between Lawrence and the players.

RECONSIDER

McKenzie said, "We'd like to say that we feel Murray was unjustly treated and we feel there should be some reconsideration about the decision to fire him."

"The players feel that if Murray is not reinstated, we will have second thoughts about returning to Vernon next season."

McKenzie said he was speaking on behalf of Matt Sekela, Nick Kapicki, Greg Kowal, Bob Wensley, Ron Berezowski, Kevin Thorlakson, Gord Simpson, Dan Baker, Rudy Poeschek, Todd Ewen, Rob Kossan, and Mike Enemark.

Gavin Shuya is the only player who has stated publicly that he probably would not return, if Lawrence did. The other six players on the roster were not contacted by McKenzie.

Earlier this week, Shuya did not criticize Lawrence's coaching ability, but was upset that he did not receive a scholarship offer that the Vernon coach had assured him he would receive.

McKenzie said, "The players don't like being us-



KEN McKENZIE
... spokesman

ed as scapegoats. We didn't really want to get involved in this, but we want to set the record straight. He was a player's coach.

"Most of the players I've talked to feel it (1982-83) was their best year of hockey. We don't feel Murray had any problems with the players... it was with management."

The players also disagreed with a management statement that they didn't work hard enough in practice. "As far as we are concerned, our practices were run efficiently... and the practice schedule was adequate."

Williment said Thursday he hopes to name a replacement for Lawrence within 10 days.

Lakers finished second in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division, one point behind Kelowna Buckaroos.