

Gilchrist makes jump from midget to WHL

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

Brent Gilchrist made a move this year that most young hockey players can only dream about.

After only one season with Vernon Midget Reps, Gilchrist joined Kelowna Wings, of the Western Hockey League. He is among a small group of 16-year-old players in a league dominated by players one to four years older.

Despite his talent and aggressive style, Gilchrist was expected to spend one season with Vernon Lakers, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, or return for another year of seasoning with the midgets. However, he impressed Wings' General Manager Joe Arling and Coach Marc Pezzin in training camp ... and stuck.

The adjustment hasn't been easy. I Not only did he have to adjust to a far more competitive level of hockey, he also had to leave home and keep up his school marks.

"It has been a lot tougher than I thought it would be," the young forward said, not on the ice, but off. It is tough to play hockey, go on road trips, and go to high school.

IN CELLAR

Wings, who are buried in the WHL cellar, recently returned from a prairie swing where they lost six consecutive outings. The second year team now has a 6-29-1 record for 13 points, one less than at this time in its in-

augural season. With a playoff berth almost out of the question, Kelowna is looking forward to future seasons. And Gilchrist is one of the players who is counted on to turn Wings into a contender.

"We're very pleased with Brent," Arling said. "He is an exceptionally hard worker ... he's improving all the time."

Gilchrist admits it gets frustrating when they lose night after night, particularly when so many games are decided by one goal. "We're very young and inexperienced," he said. "A lot of nights we outplay and outshoot the opposition, but we don't finish around the net. It will come with experience ... I think you'll see a big change in our club during the second half. We (the young players) know what it is all about ... we've got a lot of games behind us now."

14 POINTS

Gilchrist has 14 points, including four goals. However, his most obvious statistic is his penalty total, just two minutes in 34 games. Throughout his minor hockey career, he was known as aggressive and at times, an instigator.

"I don't think I've changed my style any," he said. "I still hit hard and finish my checks. It is a lot different in junior, you can hit harder. Also, I think the referees probably give me a bit of a break because I'm one of the smallest guys (5'9", 155 pounds) on the ice."

Despite the team's youth, Gilchrist said

the Wings don't get pushed around by other clubs. "Nobody outlits us," he said. "Junior hockey has changed since the days of the big, bad New Westminster Bruins. There isn't much fighting or high sticking any more."

Gilchrist has five days at home before returning to Kelowna for practices Monday and Tuesday, then a game Wednesday, against first place Kamloops Oilers.

His parents, Murray and Simone, have been active in Vernon minor sports for many years. Brent's older brother, Gary, played in the BCJHL with Vernon before spending one season with Medicine Hat Tigers, of the WHL.

LOOKS AHEAD

While he is expecting an improved performance by his club in the second half of the 1983-84 campaign, Brent is looking forward to future seasons with the Wings.

"We're going to be tough next year and the year after," he said. "Next season, it will be us who have the experience."

After his junior career, if he doesn't go directly to the pro ranks, he hopes to attend college. Wings have a program that contributes money towards the education of their players after they complete tier one hockey.

Gilchrist said, "It is just like a scholarship, only paid for by the Wings instead of the school. If I don't go any further in hockey, I can go on to university."

With such an early start in the WHL, he has a long time to impress the pro scouts!

Wensley joins all-star squad

The Interior Division has filled its 20-man roster for the annual B.C. Junior Hockey League all-star game, Jan. 19, in Richmond.

Eight players, including Vernon winger Bob Wensley, were added to the squad, Tuesday. However, Wensley's availability for the game is in doubt due to a pending suspension. The 20-year-old forward received a match penalty after an incident last week, in Penticton. Lakers are awaiting notification from the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association about the length of suspension.

Four other Vernon players, Gavin Shuya, Ken MacKenzie, Rob Kossan, and Dave Wensley were named to the first or second all-star teams, Sunday. Lakers' rookie Coach Mike Enemark will be behind the bench.

Other additions to the roster were: forwards Kelly Evan and Greg Cyr and

defenceman Tom Benson, of Summerland Buckaroos; forwards Mike Barfaro and Mike Dickerman, of Revelstoke Rangers; forward Mark Verigin, of Penticton Knights; and defenceman Pat Feeley, of Merritt Centennials.

Summerland and Vernon have a total of five players on the 20-man roster. Penticton, which shares first place with Lakers, has only three representatives on the squad.

Enemark said he was told, not asked, who the pickups would be. "They (the BCJHL) chose the players and notified me who they were," Enemark said. "I thought there would have been at least one more of our players."

If any of the players are unable to participate due to injuries or suspensions, Enemark may choose the replacements. Lakers are idle until Dec. 28 when they meet the Buckaroos, in Summerland.

JUDD'S JOURNAL

Wings stumbling

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Someone want to do a good turn this Christmas and help a dying bird in Kelowna?

There are kids dying in Kelowna, not literally, but at least spiritually and morally.

The kids in question are the youngsters who play for Kelowna Wings, doormats of the Western Hockey League for the second, consecutive season.

We could contribute toward an empty stocking fund, or maybe an empty Coopers fund?

Anyway we'll use what's collected to purchase a new management for the Wings. In the process perhaps we'll save face and a few careers for the kids who toil aimlessly for the Kelowna junior hockey franchise because no doubt the Wings' record is doubly hard on the team's 16 and 17 year olds who make up the majority of the roster.

It's not that the Wings are the first major junior hockey team to experience the doldrums and it's a safe bet they won't be the last.

SINKING LOWER

But it is hard to imagine sinking lower than the mark of ineptitude Wings set last season which is exactly the hole Kelowna's tier one squad has dug itself into.

With half their regular season behind them, the Wings have managed a record of six wins, 29 losses, and a tie. This record was spurred to its paltry proportions by a recent six-game road swing to Manitoba and back ... all of which turned a big fat nothing in the win column for Kelowna.

Wings are so bad, in fact, they are actually one point shy of the mid-season watermark they produced in their inaugural 1982-83 campaign.

Understandably, the first year of a new franchise is expected to be a black one ... even a disaster can be absorbed.

However, it's likewise assumed that a second-year club will at least kick free of the egg shell. Although sophomore slumps and occasional losing streaks can be written off as growing pains, it's generally considered a more productive season is inevitable in year two.

NOT PRODUCING

It's obvious the Wings' management is not producing. God knows no self-respecting player wants to face back-to-back years like Kelowna has so far been saddled with.

So maybe the cure lies in the cause. Get rid of the management and better things lie ahead. After all, what have the Wings got to lose?

By contrast, the Western Hockey League's other sophomore franchise, Prince Albert Raiders, has already traversed the bridge leading from mediocrity (obscurity in Kelowna's case) and is well on the road to respectability.

In fact, at last tally, the second-year Raiders had managed to battle their way into third place in the WHL's Eastern Division and in doing so have produced one of the newest and hottest rivalries in junior hockey around the province of Saskatchewan.

Show me someone who says Prince Albert, Sask. is a more desirable place to play junior hockey than Kelowna, and I'll show you someone who's ready for a padded rubber room.

From what we hear at this end of the line, Wings are still clinging to the belief that recruiting youngsters and growing with them is the route to a junior hockey dynasty.

What our Kelowna counterparts in the junior hockey game don't seem to realize is that unlike formulating a dynasty in professional hockey, there are just too many forces at work eroding this sort of plan at the junior level.

FRUSTRATION

For one thing, the frustration of constantly losing grates a little harder on a 16 or 17 year old kid than it tends to on a paid professional.

Having had to have experience some degree of success some time in his career, a professional player might be able to rise to the occasion by calling on his experience for help ... even if it's only a bit of positive reinforcement to bolster his ailing ego.

However, the same situation can disillusion a youngster to the point of hanging up the game ... or at least going back to a level of playing he knows won't be nearly so cruel to him.

RACING DAYS EXPANSION HURTS BALL

Vernon Agriculture Society, operators of Vernon Racing Days, appear to have declared war on the North Okanagan's 3,000 softball players.

The society (VAS) plans to expand its racing season from three to four weeks next summer and has asked the Greater Vernon Parks and Recreation District Committee not to allow any softball at Kin Race Track Park for a week prior to racing to permit track maintenance.

Kin Race Track Park houses the city's four best softball diamonds, two of which will have lights installed for the 1984 season. If the VAS application is approved by the recreation committee, no softball will be played in the park from July 6 to Aug. 6.

City officials including Ald. Eric Reich, who is chairman of the recreation committee, met with representatives of the VAS, Tuesday, to negotiate a solution. Russ Postill, Lionel Valair, and Paul Dumont represented the VAS at the meeting.

"They (VAS) are not being reasonable," Reich said. "We asked that the park be available the week prior to races and on nights (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays) when there are no races. We were flatly refused."

Vernon Racing Days expanded from two to three weekends last year and the VAS recently informed the recreation committee of its plan to include four weekends of racing in 1984.

Reich said, "We didn't want to fight, we wanted to negotiate. Kin Park is a multi-use facility. Taxpayers spent more than \$200,000 to build the softball fields and the softball association is putting \$40,000 into its lighting project. It is not reasonable to keep them out of the park for five weeks during the prime baseball season."

Reich said he will take the results of Tuesday's meeting to the next recreation committee meeting, in mid-January.

"The recreation committee will make the final decision," Reich said.

Knights take over top spot in division

Penticton Knights moved into first place in the BCJHL Interior Division Tuesday night with a 7-4 victory over visiting Revelstoke Rangers.

Knights now lead Vernon Lakers by two points in the battle for Interior Division supremacy, but Lakers now have one game in hand on the Penticton squad.

In other action Tuesday, Nanaimo Clippers were without the services of three of its top players but still earned an 8-3 victory over Abbotsford Flyers. Meanwhile Richmond Sockeyes and Langley Eagles battled to a 7-7 overtime tie.

In Penticton, the teams were tied 2-2 after the first period and 4-4 after 40 minutes before Knights got three unanswered goals in the final frame.

LED ATTACK

Mike DeAngelis led the winners with a pair of goals while singles came from Murray Winnicki,

Ian Kidd, Mike Barzal and Rod Schluter who scored the winner at 11:41 of the third period.

Ron Bonora, Richie Dusevic, Guy Phillips, and Todd Torrens replied for Revelstoke.

Penticton goalkeeper Mike Jeffrey made 18 saves while Mark Fitzpatrick turned aside 36 shots at the Revelstoke nets.

50 POINTS

The win gives Penticton 50 points while Revelstoke is currently in third place.

In Nanaimo, the Clippers held a 2-1 edge after the opening period and led 3-2 going into the final 20 minutes.

Len Evans and Darrel Pederson led the Clippers with two goals apiece while singles came from Al Johnston, Dale Brisco, Bill Hardy and Shane Dysart.

Doug McFaul scored twice for Abbotsford and Mike Bulka had one goal.

In Richmond, with the teams tied 7-7 in overtime, Langley's Joe West thought his slapshot at 5:50 went into the net behind Sockeye goaltender Randy Beres. But the goal judge thought differently and the game ended in a tie after the 10-minute overtime period.

Richmond led 3-1 after one period and 5-3 at the end of the second. But Langley started its comeback with three quick goals in the first 1:10 minutes of the third period to take the lead.

Richmond's David Thipps scored the tying goal at 13:12.

Eric Catchpole led the scoring for Richmond with two goals, while singles were added by Thipps, Mike Scardina, Richard Sloan, Brian Bullinger and David Holmes.

Pat Barnes and Steve Bull had two goals each for Langley.

