

Short hockey season for local defenceman

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The hockey season ended all too quickly for Vernon Lakers hockey club this year but for rookie defenceman Chris Saunders the season was even shorter and more frustrating.

Saunders, 18, was advised by the team physician early in January that contact sports were definitely out until such time as a serious head injury had a chance to heal. The prognosis meant Saunders' hockey season was effectively over until next year.

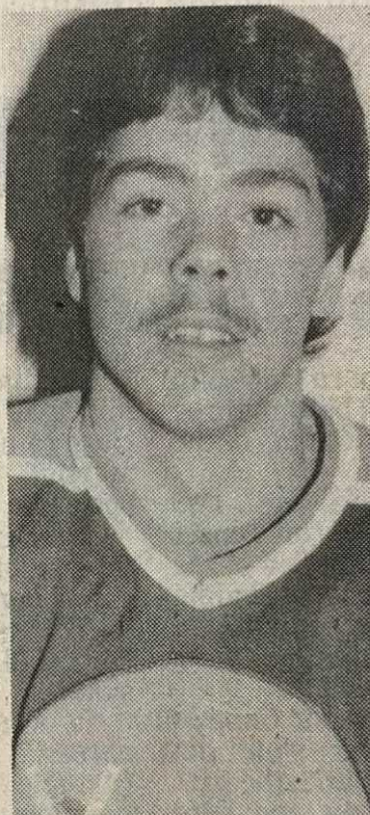
"He (doctor) said I had a contusion on my brain which is a bad bruise," said the promising young blueliner. "He also said it would heal in time just like a bruise on someone's arm. However, he also said I couldn't play any body contact sports in the meantime."

For Saunders it was a disappointing end to a season which had already

proved frustrating for the budding young junior hockey star. Though he had impressed junior scouts as a midget player with Vernon rep teams and had been a standout when brought up for the 1983 playoff round, Saunders had found the going in the 1983-84 regular season wasn't progressing as smoothly as he would have liked.

Though he possessed an ability to carry the puck and a heads-up style at the blueline that coaches admire, Saunders had difficulty putting points on the board. However, he more than held his own as a defenceman in the early going of the season and was expected to gain his confidence back in the second half of the season.

But an early injury to his head made things particularly difficult while a series of re-occurring injuries to the same area began to make life as a hockey player difficult for



CHRIS SAUNDERS

... time to heal

the young Vernon player.

"It was a series of head injuries," said Saunders. "The first time I went into the boards with my head down... I wasn't knocked out but I was certainly dazed for a long time. I couldn't remember what stall I was sitting at in the dressing room between periods."

The same injury occurred twice in a short space of time thereafter and the doctors order finally came down.

"It just needed a lot of time to heal because there was some soft tissue," suggested Saunders. "It happened right after the Czechoslovakian game and at the time I was looking forward to getting back to playing... it kind of didn't hit me for a week or so."

Despite the doctor's orders, but under his supervision, Saunders continued to practice daily with the team even though he never played another game. He also offered assistance where he could and provided support from the sidelines during the remainder of the season.

It was just as well that the young defenceman remained practicing with the squad as he will be one of the few returning blueliners next season due to a large crop of overage players graduating from that position. With a year or two of good junior hockey under his belt, Saunders hopes to obtain a college scholarship.

Buckaroos take commanding lead

SUMMERLAND, B.C. (CP) — Summerland Buckaroos, with the help of two-goal performances from centre Shawn Pettyjohn and right-winger Albert Anthony, downed Penticton Knights 6-3 Thursday in B.C. Junior Hockey League playoff action.

The win gives the Bucks a surprising 3-1 lead over the Knights, who finished the regular season first in the Interior division, in the best-of-seven semifinal series.

Kelly Evin and Dan Woodley also scored for the Bucks, who travel to Penticton today for the next game in the series.

Rod Schluter scored twice for the Knights, while Ian Kidd added the other goal. The league's record-breaking scorer, Penticton's Brett Hull, was held pointless for the second time in the series.

The teams were tied 2-2 after the first period, before Summerland went up 4-2 after the second.

Mark Taylor stopped 31 shots in goal for the Bucks, while Ian Clark made 26 saves for Penticton.