

# Mike returns to prove a point



More than a few eyebrows were raised recently when Vernon Lakers' President and General Manager Carl Enemark announced his son, Mike, would be back for his second term as head coach of the B.C. Junior Hockey League team during the 1984-85 season.

The elder Enemark and his partner, Bud Russell, were rumored to be selling the club. And Mike had indicated he wanted to play semi-pro hockey in Europe next season.

It now appears Carl has decided to spend at least one more year at the helm of the Lakers and Mike obviously is not going to Europe.

## YOUNGEST COACH

Mike, at 21, became the youngest head coach in BCJHL history last October when Chuck Tapp was fired, by Carl, after only three league games. Mike was a BCJHL all-star defenceman during the 1982-83 season and was to be groomed for the head coaching job, as an assistant under Tapp, for at least one year.

However, Tapp and Carl did not agree on several decisions and because Carl signed the cheques, Tapp became unemployed.

In his rookie season behind the bench, Mike was in a no-win situation. If the Lakers won, it was because the team had so much talent. If they lost, it was because the club was out-coached.

Mike, and everyone else, heard the rumblings in the stands. 'The only reason he is coaching is because his dad owns the team. Tapp shouldn't have been fired. If we had (Murray) Lawrence back as coach this year, we'd be 10 points ahead of Penticton Knights.'

## PROBLEMS

Mike didn't worry too much about what the fans were saying because he had other problems. The veterans had trouble adjusting to him as a coach, rather than a team-mate. He also had problems, at

times, convincing the rookies that he knew what he was talking about.

The situation reached the boiling point when Enemark released hardrock centre Gord Simpson. Simpson, one of the team's sparkplugs, was cut for disciplinary reasons.

The same nemesis plagued Lakers from the beginning to end of the regular season . . . they couldn't beat Penticton. Knights won eight of 12 meetings, including six straight in Penticton.

Then, the shocker was in the playoffs when Summerland Buckaroos, who failed to beat Lakers in 12 outings during the regular season, eliminated Vernon in six games.

More experienced coaches in Penticton (Rick Kozuback) and Summerland (Wayne Naka) made a difference at crucial times. And Mike admits he was out-coached.

"I made some mistakes," he said, "but hopefully I learned from them. I'm sure I'll be a better coach next season."

There are three reasons why Mike is returning to coach the club: because his dad asked him; because he didn't receive a good offer from a European team; and because he wants to prove himself as a coach.

"With the returning veterans and players we have recruited, I feel we can win the B.C. championship next season," Mike said. "And I want to take the team to the B.C. title. I have something to prove."

## SHOWS COURAGE

Mike must be commended for his courage. Many men, much older and more experienced than he, would have moved on to a new challenge after the criticism levelled at him last season. But, he is going to hang in there and give it another shot.

The lessons he learned last year should be invaluable during the 1984-85 season. Let us hope so because the fans won't accept inexperience as an excuse again.