

Wensley going overseas to pursue hockey career

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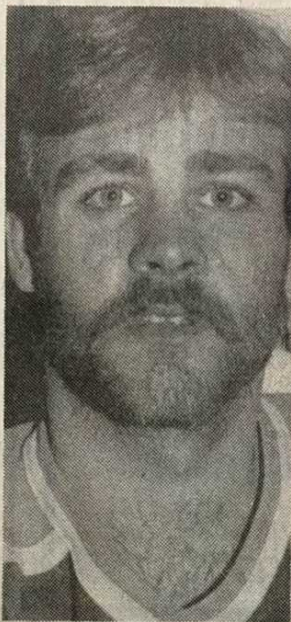
Bob Wensley has long harbored a strong desire to play hockey in the National Hockey League and a stint of professional seasoning in Finland may give the former Vernon player the opportunity to come in through the back door to the North American game.

Wensley, the older of two brothers who toiled for Vernon Lakers last season, finished his last year of junior hockey eligibility and was hoping for an offer from a German professional club as an alternative to resigning his career to the senior hockey circuit.

However, plans to play in that European country never got off the ground so Wensley, whose brother David will attend University of Maine next season on a hockey scholarship, turned to his last source of connection, his father Hank.

"Germany didn't pan out for me and so I phoned dad and told him the situation," said Wensley. "He got in touch with a friend who got me in contact with Reijo Salminen who's probably the best North American contact for European hockey."

Though Salminen had never had the opportunity to see Wensley in action, he was willing to gamble on the recommendation of the senior Wensley and the former captain of the Vernon junior squad was as good as gone.



BOB WENSLEY
... Finland bound

At this point the actual destination for Wensley's career start in the Scandinavian country remains unsettled, but the young man expects confirmation in that regard in the near future.

"I'm just waiting for written confirmation," Bob said. "I've just got to get my ticket to Helsinki and someone will meet me there."

Salminen, who hails from Bellingham, Wash. at present, is an inventor-designer as well as a curator of European hockey. One of his most recent accomplishments was the designing of the controversial keel that enabled the Australia II yacht to capture the coveted America's Cup Trophy after a 136-year monopoly held by U.S. yachtsmen. He is presently employed designing a new keel for the American yacht.

The man was formerly something of a junior hockey mogul, especially in the BCJHL when he was responsible for stocking the Bellingham Blazers with Finnish juniors.

"He told me that you have to be pro-calibre to play pro hockey in Finland," added Wensley. "I want to be able to come back and make the NHL. They (Finns) have got such an intensive training program prior to going on the ice..."

In anticipation of that gruelling dryland training program, Wensley has begun training by running five miles each day.