

Too many teams in junior hockey

The president of the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association feels there are too many junior hockey teams in this province.

Bill Colbourne was in Vernon last Saturday to address a level four-to-six referees' clinic.

Colbourne, from Burnaby, said the BCAHA recognized several years ago that junior hockey was expanding too rapidly.

"Five years ago I sat on a five-man committee which studied junior hockey," he said. "The findings of that committee included that there should be no more than 10-12 junior teams in B.C."

There are currently 12 teams in the B.C. Junior Hockey League, four clubs in the Peace Cariboo League, four B.C. teams in the Western Hockey League, and an estimated 20 junior B franchises. In addition, WHL franchises in Seattle and Portland draw players from B.C.

"There just isn't enough talent to go around," Colbourne said. "Unfortunately, the only solution to this problem is a financial one. When a club can't survive financially, it folds. However, there always seems to be someone else who comes along and wants to make it go."

Besides the lack of talent, B.C.'s rugged geography works against junior expansion. "It costs a lot of money for teams to travel in this province," he said. "It is a long way for the BCJHL Coast Division teams to go to the Interior for games. We talk about teams going north to play Prince George . . . that is a long way from the Coast."

"On the prairies, it is easy to travel from Calgary to Lethbridge or Medicine Hat for a game. In Ontario, they've got a 10-team league within a 50-mile radius, but it is a different story out here."

Colbourne's three-year stint as BCAHA and tier one hockey (WHL) is the number one achievement

during his time as president.

"There is now a feeling of co-operation, rather than antagonism, between the BCAHA and tier one," he said. "We've reached an agreement regarding the movement of players from junior A to tier one . . . that was a major problem."

Colbourne lists the lack of unity in amateur hockey, along with the uncontrolled expansion of junior hockey, as the main problems that remain unresolved.

He said, "All levels of hockey seem to want to go in their own direction. We have to get rid of the tunnel vision and realize that problems are basically the same at all levels."

"We have to forget about self-interest. Less than one per cent of all hockey players make it to



BILL COLBOURNE
... in Vernon

the pro ranks. We have too many parents who feel their child is in that one per cent and they tend to disrupt our system."

Lakers tie Salmon Arm

Defenceman Tony Christie, a sophomore 20-year old with Vernon Lakers, may have found the confidence and goal scoring touch that eluded him last season with the club, if exhibition games are a fair indication of what is to come.

Christie scored twice Saturday night, in Sicamous, to help Lakers to a 6-6 come-from-behind draw with Salmon Arm Totems in a BCJHL exhibition match-up.

The burly, Vernon blue liner might have notched a couple more but for unfortunate circumstances around the net according to team President Carl Enemark.

"He actually should have had four or five," said Enemark, who was impressed with Christie's play and the performance of veteran forward Greg Kowal. "Kowal had a real good game and he was a good leader," he said.

Totems led Vernon by period scores of 2-1 and 3-2, but could have put the game away in the first period if not for the outstanding goaltending of Lakers' Lucille Carrigan, a 17-year old walk-on to the Vernon hockey camp this year. Carrigan faced 14 shots in the first period alone while Lakers managed to direct just two against the Salmon Arm goaltender.

Sunday night, Totems dropped a 9-2 decision to Revelstoke Rangers while Penticton Knights downed Summerland Buckaroos 10-4.

Lakers also got goals from Dave King, Dave Munk, Wes Gentles, and Kowal, Saturday night. Coach Mike Enemark cut three players from the camp upon the team's return to Vernon.

The Vernon coach will have a look at five or six players who didn't dress for the team's first exhibition match when the club travels to Revelstoke, Tuesday night.