

Lakers hot in opener

By JIM JUDD

Daily News Sports

If, as they say, a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step then Vernon Lakers took a giant leap toward respectability in the BC-JHL Interior Division Friday night.

Lakers, looking much like the team that won 45 games last season, put on a stunning display of quality, entertaining hockey as they stunned visiting Revelstoke Rangers 8-2 to win their season opener Friday night at Vernon Civic arena.

Refusing to let a winless exhibition season dash their hopes of success, Lakers carried the play throughout the game and with relentless forechecking, backchecking and good positional play earned a well-deserved victory.

"They put in a real effort, all 19 guys," said Vernon coach Mike Enemark. "If they do that then we'll win our share of games."

"I can relax a bit now," he added with a sigh of relief. "A lot of pressure is off... that first win is always hard to get."

The outcome, however, was never in any serious doubt with Vernon retiring to the dressing room with period leads of 3-0 and 6-0 before trading two goals each with Rangers in the third stanza.

Lakers' forwards, with their hard skating and forechecking gave immeasurable aid to a defence that has looked suspect during the exhibition season. And, if their offensive and defensive play weren't enough, veteran goaltender Jim Young turned in an outstanding performance to backstop the local squad to victory.

"My defence was really good," said Young of his first win of the season between the pipes. "I was impressed."

Young wasn't the only one impressed with Lakers' style of play though. In addition to the appreciative, but modest-sized crowd on hand, their play also registered with Rangers' coach Murray Lawrence.

"They outworked us

and they deserved to win," offered Lawrence. "You make your breaks and they worked for all of them."

The first goal of the season went to Vernon's Shawn Lofroth who put in the third rebound during a goal-mouth scramble at 4:40 of the opening stanza. Lakers had just previously failed to score on a two-man advantage situation.

Sophomore defenceman Tony Christie, who epitomized Vernon's effort for the evening with his steady play, gave Lakers a 2-0 lead at 15:48 when he scored the first of four power-play tallies by Vernon.

Diminutive rookie centre Kyle Johnson extended the lead to 3-0 less than a minute later with a splendid individual effort that started behind the net.

In the second period, Lakers' Greg Guest, a veteran of the Peace-Caribou Junior Hockey League, scored his first of two for the night, both in the middle frame.

At 5:30 his first goal made the score 4-0 when he redirected a clever slap-shot pass along the ice from Lofroth. His second goal, on a man-advantage situation, sandwiched a short-handed goal by winger Brad Boulton. Boulton was set up for a breakaway when rookie Troy Mick forced the Revelstoke forwards to give up the puck at centre ice then found Boulton in the clear.

Rangers broke the shutout bid just a minute and 29 seconds into the third period with Paul Mottishaw providing the tally. A power-play marker by Mike Wegleitner at 12:44 accounted for all the scoring by the visitors.

Mick, with his first goal in junior hockey, and veteran captain Greg Kowal, with another man-advantage goal, rounded out Lakers' scoring.

Mick's goal came on a long, hard slap-shot from the blueline and deflected up off the stick of Rangers' goaltender Richard Potter. Kowal, who also had three assists for the night, as did

Johnson, used a hard wrist-shot from the slot to pot his first tally of the season.

Lakers have only 48 hours to rest before their second encounter of the season, a road game that will see them in Salmon Arm Sunday night to face the speedy and much-improved Totems.

Totems defeated Lakers 10-5 in the last pre-season contest that took place at Civic arena.

Meanwhile, the next home game will see Lakers entertain Sidney Capitals, formerly Cowichan Valley Capitals, of the Coastal Division. That game

takes place next Friday night at 8 pm.

In other action in the BCJHL Friday night, Penticton Knights destroyed Summerland Buckaroos 11-3 in Penticton. On the Coast the much-favored Nanaimo Clippers downed Sidney 15-2 while Richmond edged Langley 4-3.

Matthews defends star quarterback

Head coach Don Matthews of British Columbia Lions doesn't like the suggestion that his starting quarterback, Roy Dewalt, is having a sub-standard season in the Canadian Football League.

Dewalt has been the target of criticism in Vancouver this year despite the Lions' 8-2 record.

"Roy is doing the job as far as I'm concerned," Matthews said Friday. "We're not really concerned about his play — at all."

Dewalt will be at the B.C. controls tonight when the Lions host Saskatchewan Roughriders in one of two CFL games. The other had Winnipeg Blue Bombers visiting Montreal Concordes in an afternoon encounter. Calgary Stampeders play Sunday in Hamilton against the Tiger-Cats.

The Lions are coming off a humiliating 33-17 loss in Montreal, ending a six-game win streak, when Dewalt threw two touchdown passes, but didn't produce a major score on a first-and-goal from the one yard line.

Vancouver critics say Dewalt has stopped running the football and is hesitant to throw the ball down the middle when teams are jamming his outside receivers, especially Mervyn Fernandez.

"There are no restraints on Roy to



ROY DEWALT
... substandard?

run the ball," Matthews said. "That's never been an issue between Roy and the coaching staff."

"He's a passing quarterback, not a running quarterback. In the past maybe he ran too early, but now he sits in the pocket and tries to find the open receiver, just like we want him to."

Matthews said the Lions face zone defences almost every week this season and his quarterbacks, including backup Tim Cowan, are slowly learning to throw the ball into the seams of the various zone coverages.

"Every quarterback wants to succeed and tries to do so by not throwing interceptions," the coach said. "The purpose of the offence is to do the things you're comfortable with."

"I believe our quarterbacks now are to a point where they believe in throwing into the seams. There's a risk factor there, of course, but the quarterbacks are more comfortable with that play than earlier in the season."

The Lions scored 40 or more points in their first two league games, but the offensive production has slowed down in recent weeks, prompting some suggestions that Dewalt is struggling.

Dewalt is ranked No. 2 in the CFL passing statistics with 182 completions in 302 attempts for 2,506 yards and 13 touchdowns. He has thrown 12 interceptions.

"Roy has completed 60 per cent of his passes," added Matthews, "that that should be good enough to win in any league."

B.C.'s lone change for the Saskatchewan game is the insertion of rookie wide receiver Jim Sandusky in place of Ned Armour, who left for San Diego, Calif., earlier in the week to attend the funeral of his grandfather.

The Roughriders, 3-7-1, are coming off an impressive 21-18 upset of Toronto Argonauts, accomplished when quarterback Joe Paopao threw a 16-yard scoring pass to running back Craig Ellis on the last play of the game.