

Lakers in first place after beating Burnaby

Vernon Lakers scored twice in the final three minutes to defeat Burnaby Bluehawks 8-6 in B.C. Junior Hockey League action, Thursday, in Burnaby.

The win moves Lakers into first place in the BCJHL Interior Division with 11 points, one more than Penticton Knights. However, Penticton has two games-in-hand.

Defenceman Chris Saunders, playing his first game of the season for Lakers, scored the winning goal at 17:04 of the third period. Saunders has been sidelined since training camp with a broken wrist. He intercepted an errant pass near the Burnaby blue line and lifted a high shot, off the goal post, into the net.

Greg Guest got his second goal of the night, into an empty net, with 20 seconds remaining.

Vernon Coach Mike Enemark admits the winning goal was a bit of a

fluke. "With a cast on his wrist, Chris can't get much behind his shot so he was just trying to hit the net," Enemark said. "As it turned out, the puck floated high and hit the post. We'll take it."

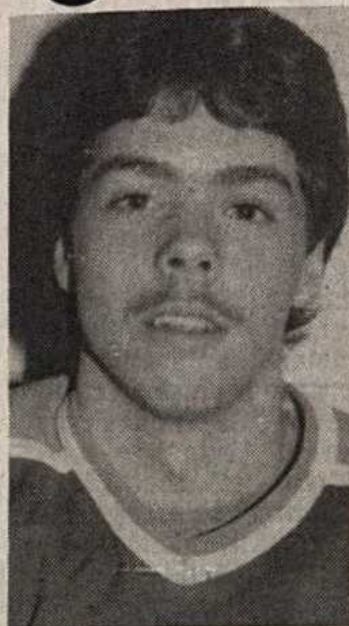
Lakers led 3-2 at the end of the first period and 6-4 after the second. Four times during the night, Vernon took a two-goal lead, but couldn't hold it.

"It seemed every time we got ahead by two goals we let up a bit," Enemark said, "and you can't do that against a team like Burnaby. Bluehawks have a lot of veterans and if you make a mistake, they'll capitalize."

Dennis Holland, Brad Bolton, West Gentles, Shawn Lofroth, and Mike Van Sinkle were the other scorers for Lakers.

Glen Engevik led Burnaby with a pair of goals while Rick Dietrich, Paul Bifano, Bruce Kenward, and Mike O'Brien rounded out the scoring.

Goaltenders Ron Boyd



CHRIS SAUNDERS
... winning goal

and Ray Woodley combined to make 33 saves for Burnaby while Jim Young turned aside 20 shots for Lakers.

Despite the lapses, Enemark was pleased with his club's performance. "You have to be happy any time you beat a team like Burnaby

... especially in their arena," he said.

Vernon's four-game Coast swing continues tonight with a visit to Langley, to take on the Coast Division leading Eagles. Glenn Mitchell or Jeff Lord will be in goal tonight for Lakers.

Vernon travels to Abbotsford, Saturday, and concludes the trip Sunday, in Richmond.

In another BCJHL game Thursday, Revelstoke Rangers blasted Salmon Arm Totems 8-2.

Murray McDonald tallied twice for the hometown Rangers while Kevin Horne, Kevin Taillefer, Rick Turgeon, Gary Ruff, Cary Fisher, and Verne Kinely had singles.

Dwight Van Brabant and Mike Robertson countered for Totems, in the third period.

In other games tonight, Penticton hosts Salmon Arm and Merritt is at Summerland.

Long wait is over for local defenceman

To date Chris Saunders' junior hockey career has been little more than a series of frustrating incidents, watching games from the sidelines, and longing to be on the ice again. But after almost a year's absence, the Vernon defenceman played for Lakers, Thursday, in Burnaby.

He'll play the four games this weekend, and the rest of Lakers' games during the next two or three months, with a cast on his wrist. But, his return will help Vernon's blueline corps.

Saunders, 18, was sidelined before Christmas last season with a series of head injuries which resulted in a lasting confusion on his brain and eventually forced doctors to prohibit the young rearguard from playing for the remainder of last season.

Suitably healed and raring to go, Saunders checked into Lakers' camp again this fall only to be sidelined in short order with a serious wrist fracture that has kept him out of action until Thursday. However, since the wrist bone broken was of the slow-mending variety, Saunders will have to wear a cast on his wrist while the bone heals properly.

"It's the scaphoid bone and they supposedly take four to six months to heal," explained the Vernon native, who was a star with the local midget reps two years ago.

"I was hoping to get a playing cast but I'll have to play with a plaster cast I guess ... I'll probably be playing with it for several months," he said.

Of course playing with a cast on one's wrist is definitely a handicap, but Saunders feels he'll learn to adjust and will be able to contribute at least his share to the team in the process.

"It'll hamper my game but I'll just have to cope with it," he said. "I'll probably have to tell the ref before each game and of course no fighting at all."

Lakers' coach Mike Enemark, meanwhile, is more than a little happy to have him back.

"He's a veteran and a proven player but he has to work his way into the lineup slowly," said Enemark. "Technically he's been off for a year so he can't just jump into the game again."

Enemark plans to use Saunders sparingly for the next while but hopefully by the time the cast is ready to come off for good, Saunders will be back on top of his game.

"We can't expect too much right off the bat," explained Enemark. "I expect it'll be a month or so before he'll be up to his capacity."

However, Enemark knows that a talented individual such as Saunders will be a help to his club and will fit well into the grand scheme of things.

"We have to get him healthy and keep him that way if we expect him to help us," said Enemark. "We'll use him sparingly for a while."

Howe, Hull join college

For a quarter-century, every young hockey player has dreamed of playing with Gordie Howe and Bobby Hull.

That dream will come true for three North Okanagan players, Monday, when Howe and Hull play for Douglas College Royals in an exhibition game at Queens Park Arena, in New Westminster.

Randy Jones and Glen Hampton, of Armstrong, and Ron Itterman, of Vernon, are in their second year with Douglas College, which plays in the Totem Conference.

Itterman and Jones were members of the Vernon Coca-Cola Juvenile



GORDIE HOWE
plays Monday