

Third period outburst gives Centennials win

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Vernon Lakers received a lesson in humility from visiting Merritt Centennials, Friday night, at Civic Arena.

Centennials, exhibiting a lot of hustle and desire, overcame a 4-1 deficit to post a 7-4 victory over Lakers and move into a tie for third place in the BCJHL Interior Division with Summerland Buckaroos.

Lakers remain in second place despite back-to-back losses that leave them with a record of 7-6-1. Penticton Knights, 10-8 winners over hometown Langley Eagles Friday night, remain solidly in first place with an 11-1-0 record.

Centennials, with their third consecutive victory, showed why they are the league's hottest team right now with their aggressive style of play and a power-play as formidable as any in the league.

Vernon gave up three man-advantage tallies to the visitors, two during the third period when Merritt scored four unanswered goals to win the game. Centennials also notched a short-handed goal late in the second period that turned the game around in their favor.

Vernon had just scored a power-play marker to take a 4-1 lead while at a

two-man advantage. Still with the power-play, and things seemingly in hand, Lakers assumed a more relaxed composure. Less than a minute and a half after their fourth goal, centre Brad Smiley stole the puck at his own blue line, raced in all alone on Jeff Lord and beat the Vernon goaltender with a backhand shot.

Centennials totally controlled the game thereafter, scoring five more unanswered goals en route to their victory.

Pat Cheveldave pulled the visitors to within a goal at 15:59 of the second period. Mark Bogoslawski and Smiley, with their second each, Rod Torrens and Rob Revell each beat Lord in the third period.

Greg Kowal scored his 11th and 12th of the season in a losing cause for the local club, both in the first period. Defenceman Murray Baron, with a bullet-like drive from just inside the blue line, and a power-play tally from defenceman Tony Christie accounted for all the Vernon scoring. Lakers were held scoreless through the second half of the game.

While things were quiet at the Vernon end of the rink at the game's conclusion, it was pure pandemonium in the Merritt dressing room as the visitors celebrated their first victory in Vernon in almost two seasons.



GREG KOWAL
... scored twice

"It (victory) was particularly sweet in this building after what happened last year," offered Merritt coach Chuck Tapp, who was released as Lakers' coach a year ago after just three regular season games.

One of the more successful tactics Tapp has instituted in Centennials' playbook is their handling of penalty-killing situations.

"We've changed our defensive system on our penalty-killing," said Tapp. "In the last three games we've had a short-handed goal each time ... we essentially play a diamond formation instead of the triangle or a box."

Len Sloan, assistant coach of Lakers, sighted a number of reasons for the club's loss, but the accent was on positional play in their own zone.

"We have to improve in our own end," said Sloan. "That was a major factor in the game tonight (Friday). We started running around in our own end too much."

Lakers have an opportunity to open some more breathing space between themselves and the third place when they travel to Revelstoke tonight. Rangers are winless in their last seven games and have won just two of their first 12 starts this season. Sunday night the local club travels to Summerland, victimized 10-1 by Centennials, Tuesday night.

In Langley Friday night, Mike Barzal scored twice to lead Penticton to its victory. Single goals came from Murray Winnicki, Ian Kidd, Ed Cristofoli, John Shaw, Scott Rawson, Shaun Edwards, Mike Durant, and Todd Brost.

John Basco and Derrick Ruppel had two goals each for the Coastal Division-leading Eagles with singles from Rod Ware, Rob Clarke, Richard Sloan, and Dean Duprey.

Knights are in Abbotsford tonight while Salmon Arm is in Nanaimo.