

Lakers win listless battle



Lakers' captain Greg Kowal gets a bit of rough treatment from Summerland defenceman Ron Lyver during action in the third period

Sunday night at Civic arena. Lakers had two-goal leads twice but squandered them to the visitors before winning the game by a narrow 7-6

margin. Kowal, who leads the club in scoring this season, had two goals.

(Daily News Photo)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Vernon Lakers squandered two-goal leads on three occasions but hung on to earn a narrow 7-6 victory over visiting Summerland Buckaroos Sunday night at Vernon Civic arena.

The win, Lakers first this season over Bucks, opened a three-point breathing space between themselves and Summerland in the battle for second place in the BCJHL Interior Division.

Lakers sandwiched a lacksadaisical second period effort with hard-hitting, close-checking periods in the first and third frames en route to their 12th victory of the season and fourth in the last five starts.

The local club had numerous opportunities to salt the game away early but chose instead to float through extended periods of listlessness during which the equally listless Bucks took the opportunities to tie the game.

"We had a lot of good opportunities and could have scored a few more goals," said Lakers' coach Don Moores who is now two-for-two since taking over behind the Vernon bench although neither victory, both at home, have been overly convincing. "What we seem to do is let off after we get up by a couple of goals . . . we showed a lot of character tonight because they (Lakers) stuck to our new system."

The 'system' Moores is referring to is a somewhat complicated defensive structure Moores calls the loose-three forechecking system.

"Forwards have to blitz plus the defenceman has to read the situation and either take the man and the puck or back off . . . that's a tough situation to read until they get accustomed to it."

Moores was right on at least one account as Lakers defencemen were continually misreading the Bucks' forward units. However, Frank Romeo, who was goated on the first and fourth goals, was basically sharp the rest of the time and kicked out a lot of point-blank shots by the Bucks' shooters.

The game was an all-important one for Vernon who now must face Penticton Knights Friday night. Knights lead the Interior Division by a healthy, if not insurmountable lead at this early point in the regular season.

"It was actually a four-point game for us so it was a big two points," added Moores.

Bucks got on the scoreboard first with Neil Didcott notching his first of two goals for the night at 2:29. Didcott found no trouble skating wide of the Vernon defence and beat Romeo with a

soft backhand shot.

Lakers roared back with three straight goals to take a lead they never relinquished. However, the intensity never lasted. Winger Darin Campbell put the clubs on even ground at 3:19 while Greg Kowal had an easy time putting Shannon Pohl's rebound into an empty net at 3:57. Frank Dutoff broke in alone to score a short-handed tally at 6:14.

At that point Lakers appeared to have things well in hand but then the listless attitude set in and Bucks' Mark Valley pulled the visitors to within a goal before the period ended.

Defenceman Sean Hartnell, who along with twin brother Stacy provided most of the excitement during the Lakers' periods of ineptitude, regained Vernon's two-goal lead at 2:06 of the second period.

Bucks got goals from Tim Munro and Campbell Blair to tie the score at 4-4 with Nick Kapicki and Brad Boulton's goals sandwiching another Bucks goal by Craig Bedard before the second frame expired.

The teams traded goals in the third frame with Kowal's second of the night restoring the illusive two-goal lead while Didcott's short-handed effort at 18:18 nearly changed the direction of the game in the dying moments of play.

Lakers have five days in which to practice and get familiar with some obviously unfamiliar tactics before they entertain Penticton Friday night. That game should see the reappearance of Shawn Lofroth on the Vernon blueline which will add some badly needed speed and puck-carrying ability to the defensive corps.

In other BCJHL action Sunday, Penticton Knights humiliated Revelstoke Rangers 17-4 while Salmon Arm Totems relished a rare victory with a 6-4 triumph over Merritt Centennials and Abbotsford Flyers trimmed Sidney Capitals 3-1.

In Penticton, Captain Ia Kidd, Cliff Furnseth, Joe Murphy, Greg Cyr, Ed Cristofoli, Tim Paller and Shawn Harrison each scored twice for Knights who led 11-2 after two periods following a 3-1 first period lead.

Salmon Arm jumped out to a 5-1 lead but had to withstand a late rally by Merritt before clinching its win. Paul Lemaire, Jeff Kentel, Kent Maitais, Terrance Head, Dwight VanBrabant and Albert Anthony, into an empty net, scored for Totems.

Kevin Sheveldave scored twice for the losers while Al Walls and Pat Ryan added singles.

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