



FORWARD Gord Simpson positions himself in the slot area during the final game of the Rude Pravo Tournament.

in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Checking Simpson is Martin Urban, of the Slavia-Praha Team. Clippers became the

first North American club to win the prestigious tournament by downing Slavia-Praha. (Kevin Mitchell Photo)

Czechoslovakian tour exciting for local players

By KEVIN MITCHELL
Sports Editor
Nanaimo Free Press

CZECHOSLOVAKIA — For three Vernon area youths, a three-week tour of this country provided new insight into European hockey and the Communist lifestyle.

Kevin Thorklason, 19, and Gord Simpson, 20, both of Vernon, and Ron Sparks, 19, of Armstrong, are all glad they joined Nanaimo Clippers on their tour of Czechoslovakia, a trip which saw the B.C. Junior Hockey League club become the first North American team to win the prestigious Rude Pravo Tournament.

In addition to winning the eight-team Rude Pravo tourney, which included one team from West Germany, the Clippers had the pleasure of battling the Czech national 20-year-old side twice, a team heavily favored to win this month's world junior championships in Finland.

"The trip was sure eye-opening," said Thorklason, who was Nanaimo's fifth highest point-getter in Czechoslovakia with four goals and four assists.

"I'm glad I came on the trip because you should see the other side of the world and how they live. It makes you realize how lucky we are."

Thorklason, whose biggest goal was the winning tally in a 6-5 win over a junior team in Brno, felt the highlight of the 11-game tour was the 7-5 loss to the Czech national 20-year-olds in Hodonin, a small city which groomed Vaclav Nedomansky for the NHL.

"That was fun," said Thorklason. "The intensity in that first game was unreal. It was disappointing that we didn't win because we had the lead after two periods. Maybe we weren't the best team, but we could have beaten one of the best junior teams in the world if we could have held together at the end."

With more than 2,000 whistling fans jammed to the Hodonin Sport Klub Arena and both the Canadian and Czech flags hanging from the ceiling, Thorklason found it very touching listening to his country's national anthem.

"Against was Canada against another country," he said. "I've played in Seattle, but the States and us are almost the same. In Czechoslovakia I definitely felt quite proud to listen to our anthem, staring at the other players and wondering what was going to happen. I felt the goosepimples for sure."

As for the entire tour, Thorklason said, "Finally I got something out of hockey that's going to be with me forever. You don't really forget a trip like this."

Clipper coach Doug Harding had nothing but praise for the hustling Thorklason, who usually found himself playing right wing on a line with 16-year-old centre Chris Calverley and Sparks.

"I was very pleased with Thorklason," said Harding, who in 1981 guided Cowichan Valley Capitals to a second place finish in the Rude Pravo tourney.

"He played very hard throughout the whole tour. I thought he was our best player in the exhibition games."

It didn't take Simpson, who like Thorklason is a former Vernon Laker, long to make his presence felt in that opening game against the Czech national juniors.

He set up Rob Schmidt for the Clippers' second goal just 1:47 into the game and then with less than three minutes left in the first frame was hauled down by Leo Gudas on a breakaway. Simpson, however, missed the ensuing penalty shot which would have given Nanaimo a 4-1 lead.

"I knew I should have shot," said Simpson, who lost control of the puck as he tried to deke Czech goalie Eduard Hartman.

Simpson wasn't surprised how well the Clippers played against the Czech 20-year-olds, who boasted six players from the Czech Canada Cup roster.

"Those kind of games happen when you're playing a team which expects to blow you out. The two games against the Czech 20-year-olds were like the playoffs at home last year."

On the Czech style of play, Simpson said, "They're fast, always moving. You never know who's going to get the puck. I liked their style, but I think the best style would be bodychecking and the way they played combined."

As for Czechoslovakia, Simpson said, "I'll definitely remember Czechoslovakia as a country. I had trouble adjusting to the time difference (nine hours). I was really sluggish up until the tournament. I would come back in a group, but not by myself, unless it had to do with business."

Simpson, who missed two months of the BCJHL



GORD SIMPSON covers Ales Flisav, 20, of the Czech National Team. Simpson spent two seasons

with Vernon Lakers before joining Clippers last year. (Kevin Mitchell Photo)

schedule with a shoulder injury, produced one goal and five assists on the Czech tour. He often played on a line with wingers Jamie Cayford and Schmidt.

Sparks, unfortunately was the first Clipper to require medical attention, needing four stitches in his chin during that first game. He took the stitches without any freezing, learning later, that in Czechoslovakia you have to ask for freezing before they'll give you any.

"I found Czechoslovakia to be very interesting," said Sparks, who a year ago could be

found playing hockey for Armstrong Sports Shop, in the White Valley League.

"It gives you a view of a Communist country, a chance to see how they live. It doesn't turn me on at all. They have no freedom. All the things were the same. There is no free enterprise or anything like that."

Sparks, who scored his only goal of the tour in the Clippers' 11-3 win over Slavia-Praha in the Rude Pravo championship game, found it frustrating trying to play his rugged style in a foreign country. "They're faster than we

are. It was hard for me because of the refing. Because I like to hit, I really couldn't play my game. When you hit someone clean or not over there, you get a penalty. The other aspect was that it was easy because they didn't hit you."

Outside of the Czech ice rinks, Sparks found a 16th century chapel to be quite impressive in the city of Znojmo.

"That Catholic chapel was great. Me being Catholic, I found that really thrilling."

The Clippers finished the Czech tour with a 5-6 record.



VERNON minor hockey graduate Kevin Thorklason rifles a shot past Czech defender Roman Lipovsky during an exhibition game. Thorklason collected eight points, including four goals, in 11 games. He played with

Lakers and Merritt Centenials, of the BCJHL, before going to Nanaimo this season. (Kevin Mitchell Photo)

sports

Vernon
Daily
News

Editor—DON KENDALL

SPORTS BRIEFS

Big night for Poeschek

Vernon minor hockey graduate Rudy Poeschek scored one goal and set up another to help Kamloops Blazers trounce Portland Winter Hawks 7-2 in Western Hockey League action, Wednesday, in Portland. In other games, Prince Albert Raiders whipped Saskatoon Blades 7-3, Regina Pats edged Lethbridge Broncos 3-2, and Medicine Hat Tigers tripled Calgary Wranglers 6-2. Raiders have won 11th consecutive outings.

Major men's volleyball

In Major Men's Volleyball League play Wednesday, the scores were: Askews Shop Easy 2, Rosman Bros. Auto 0; Weekend Warriors 2, Rosman Bros. 0; Warriors 1, Porkchawks 0; Porkchawks 1, Kal Tire 0; Shop Easy 1, Kal Tire 0; Kal Tire 1, Warriors 1; Shop Easy 1, Porkchawks 1; Kal Tire 1, Rosman Bros. 0; Warriors 1, Shop Easy 0; and Porkchawks 1, Rosman Bros. 0.

Dionne leads RCMP

Mike Dionne scored two goals to lead RCMP to a 4-3 win over Big Momma's Pizza in Pleasant Valley Hockey League action, Wednesday. Irv Miller and Bob Gregorash were the other marksmen for RCMP. Daryl Hoover and Pete Smith countered for Big Momma's Pizza.

Women's volleyball

In Women's Intermediate 'B' Volleyball League action Wednesday, the scores were: Jokers 4, Interior Appliance 0; Mousekaters 3, Anthony's Jewellers 1; Blue Water Angels 4, Corbett's Crushers 0; Net Benders 3, Sandy Beach Gals 1; Rockettes 2, Ghostbusters 2; Art's Gulf 4, Court With Appeal 0; Maybees 2, Paddington Station 2; Interior Appliance 3, Pink Panthers 1; Rent-A-Wreck 2, Artesians 2; Beer Nuts 3, Chimos 1; and Medi-Wipes 3, Longhorn 1.

Haas captures race

PUY-ST-VINCENT, France (CP) — Calgary-born Zoe Haas of Switzerland came from behind to win the opening World Cup downhill ski race today. Haas, 22, started 37th on the ideally hard, two-kilometre course, but posted a stunning time of one minute 26.30 seconds to edge pre-race favorite Martina Kiehl of West Germany by five one-hundredths of a second.

Veteran Irena Epple of West Germany was third in 1:28.55.

Only one Canadian racer finished in the top 10. Diana Haight, 20, of Fruitvale B.C., tied for ninth with Austria's Silvia Eder, at 1:27.40.

Schliebener demoted

VANCOUVER (CP) — Defenceman Andy Schliebener has been returned to Fredericton Express of the American Hockey League by Vancouver Canucks, the National Hockey League team said Wednesday.

Schliebener played in 11 NHL games without a point and minus 11 in the plus-minus ratings, with 16 penalty minutes.

Celtics whip Nuggets

Boston Celtics gave Denver Nuggets a lesson in running and gunning Wednesday night while extending their home unbeaten streak to nine games with a 123-107 National Basketball Association romp.

"This is the first game we've been out of," said

SUPER CURLING

Simpson wins easily

Dave Simpson (Baron Insurance), coming off a third place finish in the recent Abbotsford Cash Bonsel, hammered Brian McCormick (Orchard Park Car Wash) 12-4 in Wawanesa Super Curling League action, Wednesday.

Simpson led 4-2 before breaking the game open with three in the sixth. McCormick battled back with a deuce in the seventh, but Simpson put the game out of reach with a five-ender in the eighth.

In other games at Vernon, Randy Brown (M and K Ready Mix) trounced winless Mike Friedel (Discount Vacuum) 11-3 in five ends. Bob Harris (N and H Contracting) nipped Rob Lister (Fairfax Doors) 7-6, and Brian Scott (CKOV) edged Herb Van Groote (National Hotel) 7-6 in an extra end.

At Kelowna, Bert Gretzinger (Star Scan Communications) stretched his win streak to nine games with a 6-5 victory over Wally Tutkaluk (Ben's Meat Market). Doug Hannan (Interior Lift Truck) outscored Wayne Laface (Waddy's Restaurant) 10-7. Barry Smith (Shady's Pizza) whipped Blake Kimura (Empire Meats) 9-4, and Mark Longworth (Hong Kong Village) downed Gord Woodward (Castle Nissan) 9-5.

Gretzinger leads the loop with 18 points, four more than Longworth and Brown. Five rinks share third spot with 12 points.

Van Groote, facing three in the 10th, hit and stuck for one to tie the game. In the extra end, Scott drew to the four-foot circle to extend his win streak to six games.

Harris drew to the four-foot, in the 10th end, to hand Lister his seventh consecutive defeat.

Tutkaluk took a 5-4 lead in the ninth, but Gretzinger fought back two in the 10th to maintain his perfect record.

Tricky ice proved deadly for Laface. Laface took a 4-1 lead, but a wide open miss in the sixth end allowed Hamman to score five. Laface picked up three in the seventh, but Hamman counted two in the eighth and stole a deuce in the ninth.

Smith snapped a 4-4 deadlock by counting three in the eighth and stealing two in the ninth. He made a great double takeoff, off his own rock, on a Kimura counter in the eighth.

Longworth broke open a close game with three in the ninth. Woodward wrecked on a guard, on his final rock, which gave Longworth a free draw.

Bird foursome ends long slump

Frank Bird (Sundowner Restaurant) made a difficult hit and stick shot in the 11th end to edge Dick Latta (Manu Life) 9-8 in Vernon Super Curling League action, Wednesday.

It was Bird's first win of the season after seven consecutive losses. In other games, Keith Altwasser (Mountain Pacific Air) downed Doug Miller (Speicher's United Carpet) 7-4. Rick Latta (B.C. Sports World) aced Paul Barylja (Sigalet Bros.) 9-8, and Larry Wynn (RJ's Chicken and Ribs) nipped Jim Fuhr (Golden Crown Restaurant) 8-7.

Altwasser stole points in the third and seventh ends on route to his seventh victory, in eight outings. Rick Latta took an 8-3 lead, in the fifth end, and hung on to down Barylja. Wynn moved into sole possession of second place, behind Altwasser, by stealing the ninth and 10th ends.

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

DECEMBER, 1979

The high scoring of Kelly Olson led the Vernon Panthers to a 78-71 victory Friday over Rutland Voodoos in high school basketball action. Olson scored on 29 of 37 shots.

North Okanagan Hockey League president Chris Nelson today announced the league's mid-season all-star team which will meet the defending champion Vernon Cougars Dec. 29 in Vernon.