

SPORTS BRIEFS

Lakers host two games

After a two-week layoff, Vernon Lakers return to the ice for a pair of B.C. Junior Hockey League home games this weekend. Lakers host Merritt Centennials, Friday, and Salmon Arm Totems, Saturday. Students will be admitted at a discount rate for both weekend games. Vernon currently occupies second place in the BCJHL's Interior Division, seven points ahead of Summerland Buckaroos.

Names to watch

Canucks respectable



By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Now that the hangovers have subsided and the celebration is over, we get into 1985, bidding a not-too fond farewell to 1984. While some of us are happier to see it gone than others, most are simply happy it's in the past.

With the new year we try to develop an optimistic spirit about things to come and I'm willing to lead things off by burying the hatchet between myself and professional sports teams in B.C. . . . particularly Vancouver Canucks.

True I've been guilty of giving them a kick when they were down and had lots of fun doing it, but I'm ready to let bygones be bygones heading into 1985. If that surprises you let me say that B.C. residents have Canucks to thank for the change in heart I've gone through over last year.

For 11 of the 12 months that was 1984, Canucks went fruitlessly about their business caring little for their fans or for their responsibility to the sports community as professional athletes.

A month ago they were busy re-writing the book on ineptitude.

But as they say, it's always darkest before the dawn and Canucks' transformation from sea-slugs to competitors in the last month of the year almost made up for the previous 11 in which they stunk out just about every hockey arena in the NHL circuit.

GOOD MONTH

Let's take heart from the example the boys in funny uniforms have made for us. While they remain a good distance from the playoff picture in the Smythe Division, Canucks have much to be proud of for the month of December. The most notable achievement was the five of six points they took from the Edmonton Gretzkys in three meetings . . . one of those a 3-1 victory over the Oilers, in the Northlands Coliseum.

Perhaps over the long run they won't be contenders nor even amass a winning percentage. But, at least on any given night Canucks can be as good as the best and sometimes that's all that really counts to the people who pay good money to watch.

While Canucks open the new year with a five-game road trip there's cause for optimism where only a short time ago hockey fans would have groaned at the idea.

On that optimistic note, let's take a swing a little closer to home and our own Vernon Lakers of the BCJHL. Lakers were no slouches in the dying days of 1984 and, like the Canucks, have given their fans reason to be optimistic for the New Year.

In the last month of their 1984 season schedule, Lakers, under new coach Don Moores, posted a record of seven wins, two losses and a tie in 10 games and in doing so put themselves seven points ahead of third place Summerland Buckaroos in the Interior Division.

PLAYING BETTER

The club is definitely playing better these days under Moores and as an added bonus, they received forward Jason Phillips from Kamloops Blazers of the WHL . . . sort of an early Christmas present.

Phillips appears to be the answer to Moores' prayers for a goal scorer.

With the return of smooth-skating defenceman Chris Saunders expected early in this New Year, Lakers will finally be in a position to give Penticton Knights a run for their money in the battle for supremacy in the Interior Division.

One last person to remember when talking of optimism for the new year is Vernon's Steve Fonyo. Soon after you read this, Fonyo will be returning to the long trail that will end at the Pacific Ocean some time in the spring. The determined young man has already covered more than 1700 miles, raised nearly a half million dollars for cancer research and has done more than anyone else (with one exception) in unifying this country from coast to coast under a common cause.

Only one thing remains in memory of 1984. Let's thumb our noses in unison, at George Orwell . . . the big, bad year has come and gone and we're all still here.

Here's to 1985. Let's go for it!