

JUDD'S JOURNAL

Merritt gets help



By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The struggle currently going on in the BCJHL Interior Division is shaping up to be a bit more than what it appears on the surface. Before the season has ended, however, there could be more than one team accused of some under-handed tactics in achieving their end.

Things have generally been cut and dried in the Interior for some years now. Pentiction Knights have had a tendency to run away with things. Vernon and Summerland Buckaroos, formerly of Kelowna, have fought hard for second and third spot and usually it's all that has mattered. No one is about to argue that it's been a three-team division for some time now.

The fourth and final playoff spot, not that it mattered much, was always up for grabs and was thrown to Salmon Arm, Revelstoke, and Merritt to be fought over like dogs for a bone. But, that position of vital interest to everyone concerned this season, Pentiction has definitely run off with first place, of that there's no doubt, and Vernon has got second place all but sewed up at this point. Only a monumental upset in the latter portion of this season would see those two positions altered.

NO CONTEST

A few short weeks ago there was no contest for third place in the division. Clearly it belonged to either Summerland or Vernon, depending on who got hot at what time and Lakers were the club that got hot.

With the change of coaching staff in late-November, Lakers embarked on an escape that has seen them win 13, lose just three, and tie one game. Only Pentiction Knights, who managed to pick up three more points in that stretch, have been hotter than the Lakers.

With the sudden spurt, Vernon solidified its hold on second place, putting a dozen points between themselves and the Bucks who went into something of a tailspin during the same period.

At the same time Lakers got hot, though, Merritt Centennials broke out of their shell and began a winning campaign of their own. While it was pale in comparison to some others in the league, by Merritt standards it has been phenomenal.

The result has left the once lowly Cents in a position to overtake Summerland and finish the season in third spot, which if you know anything about Merritt would be like winning the entire BCJHL.

Nonetheless, facts are facts. There is a chance that Merritt will finish in third spot. If they can't do it on their own, certain other teams in the league may alter the situation accordingly so that they do.

TOUGH TRIP

You see, Merritt, being situated in the unlikely topographical region of this province that it is, is nothing more than a pain in the rear as far as travelling is concerned. It's almost easier for most teams in the Coastal Division to travel to Merritt than it is for some of the Interior Division clubs. This factor is what will play an important role in the decision making in and around board rooms of certain hockey clubs over the next few weeks.

If the season were to end right now, it would be fine and dandy for Vernon. They would face Summerland in the first playoff round which means an easy hour and a half bus ride to the South Okanagan centre.

Pentiction Knights would be forced to travel the cumbersome and unpredictable highway to a series with Merritt.

However, if the Centennials, by some act of God or otherwise, were to finish in third place, the picture changes drastically. Lakers would be forced to take the great circle route via and the Trans-Canada Highway to the home of the beligerent Centennials.

Pentiction, on the other hand, would face Summerland in the first round as the first-fourth matchup decrees.

What an ideal situation that would be for Knights. A mere 12 miles of blacktop separates the two centres and due to this proximity, the arenas would surely be filled to capacity for each game of the series.

BLEW LEAD

How badly would the Knights like this to happen? Well, for instance, it does seem a bit strange that Knights recently blew a 6-2 lead in the third period, had seven goals scored on them in eight shots, and dropped a 9-7 decision to the Centennials. Meanwhile, each time Knights play Summerland they systematically pound them into the ice, from start to finish.

In the meantime, Lakers are cutting their own throats by defeating Summerland and losing to Merritt. Something tells me the Centennials will get even hotter in the next few weeks in their games against Pentiction.

Knights, meanwhile, with nothing to lose since they already have secured first place, will likely devote the rest of the season to making their playoff wishes come true.

The trouble is that a "subway" series with Pentiction sounds just as inviting to Summerland and none of the present alternatives provide any kind of incentive for the Bucks to push for a third place rather than fourth place finish.

Stay tuned folks, I'm sure the plot will thicken.

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

JANUARY, 1980
Vernon pup rep teams have won the Okanagan Mainline title for the past three seasons and this year's version stands a good chance of making it four in a row.

JANUARY, 1980
Fifteen-year-old Dean Southern, a top backstroke competitor in the Kokanee Swim Club, has qualified for the B.C. Championships in the 100 and 200 metre events.



Todd Brost, centre with Pentiction Knights, moves in looking for a rebound off Lakers' goaltender Jim Young while Vernon

defenceman Murray Baron attempts to block his advance. Knights, as usual, had things their own way throughout most of

the regular season contest Tuesday night and handed Lakers an 8-3 loss in front of an enthusiastic hometown crowd.

(Daily News Photo)

KNIGHTS 8 LAKERS 3

Different approach produces similar results for Vernon

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports
The more things change the more they remain the same.

Boistered by a new coach, a new style, a new system, and a current hot streak Vernon Lakers still achieved the same result Tuesday night in Pentiction.

Knights scored short-handed goals 13 seconds apart midway through the first period and never looked back as they strangled the helpless Lakers 8-3 before an enthusiastic crowd... one which never leaves the rink disappointed when Lakers are in town.

"Our speed is a real factor," suggested Knights' coach Rick Kozuback who was dismayed at his club for allowing Lakers to score two quick goals late in the

game and thereby spoil an 8-1 Knights' lead. "What really hurt them was the two short-handed goals... but then we've scored a lot of those this year."

Meanwhile, Lakers' coach Don Moores, who led Lakers into Pentiction for the first time since he took over as coach of the club in late November, defended the ineptitude of his team's power-play which went zero for six attempts on the night while allowing two goals against.

"They (Knights) use the diamond triangle very effectively in killing penalties," explained Moores in something of an understatement. Lakers failed to mount any semblance of a scoring threat during their man-advantage situations.

Vernon was in the game until Knights drew their first penalty at the 10 minute mark of the first period. The effect of the short-handed goals was devastating enough to dissolve Lakers' game into nothing more than a series of individual efforts after that point.

"We played eight minutes at the beginning and then we outplayed them in the third period said Moores. "The biggest thing is to keep going... we won one period tonight and that's a place to start."

Greg Kowal managed to put Lakers on the scoreboard with a splendid goal just 33 seconds into the second period and for a brief while it appeared as though they might turn the game around.

However, five straight

goals by Knights dissolved any thoughts of a comeback.

Frank Dutoff and Stacy Hartnell pumped in quick goals just seven seconds apart in the latter portion of the third period but it was clearly a case of too little, too late at that point.

Ed Cirsofoli scored a pair for Knights who out-shot Lakers 65-42 on the evening. Vernon netminder Jim Young retired from between the pipes after Knights' seventh goal at 18:08 of the second period.

Greg Cyr, James Burnett, Murray Winnicki, John Depourecq, Rod Ware, and Greg Guidinger also had goals

for Knights who led 3-0 and 7-1 by periods.

In other games Tuesday night Burnaby Bluehawks doubled Langley Eagles 10-5, and Richmond Sockeyes downed Nanaimo Clippers 6-2.

Lakers next action is Friday night when they host the Coastal Division leading Burnaby Bluehawks. Burnaby features the scoring prowess of Bob Ginnetti who leads the league in scoring.

Following Friday's game Lakers embark on a two-game swing through Vancouver Island, playing Nanaimo Saturday night and Sidney of Sunday.

Longworth rink reaches playoffs

Mark Longworth rink of Vernon qualified in the B-event of the zone curling playoff currently underway at Kimberly Curling Club. Longworth defeated Barry McPhee of Kamloops 9-5 Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, the status of two other Vernon rinks playing off for a chance at Provincial berths in Kimberley, is unknown at this time. Dave Simpson is on his last leg in the C-event and has to win twice in today's action in order to stay alive.

Wayne Laface's foursome were on the ice Tuesday night but it wasn't known at press time whether or not the local rink had won or lost.

Longworth stung McPhee for four in the first end of his game and when McPhee flashed an opportunity to regain the same four in the second end it was all over. Longworth managed to steal four in a row later in the game and ran the Kamloops rink out of rocks in the last end to preserve their victory.

Longworth's foursome will be among the 16 rinks competing for three berths into the Provincial Men's Curling Championship. That playoff gets underway Thursday morning in Kimberley.

Long Shots win basketball game

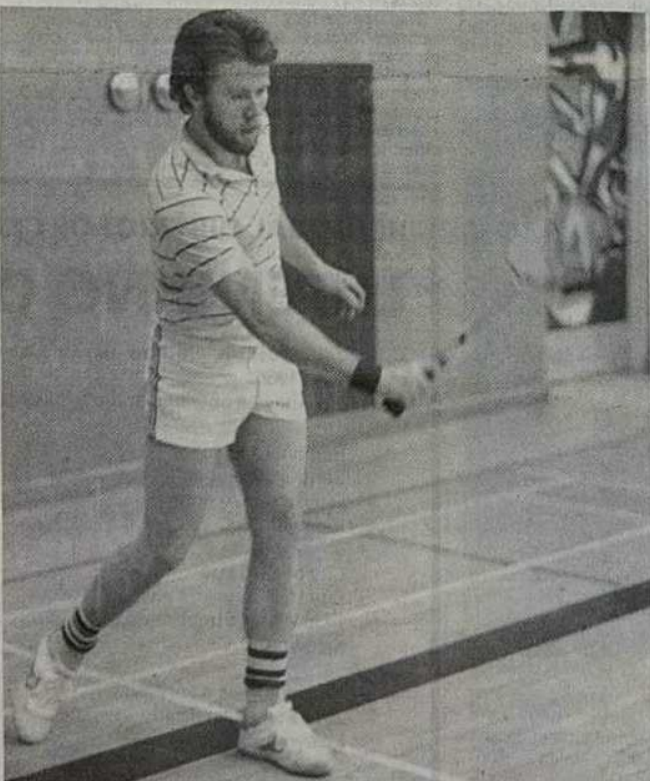
Kathy Bultitude's 16-point performance sparked Long Shots to a 46-37 victory over Rebels in one of two games played Tuesday night in the Major Women's Basketball League.

In other action, Basket Cases defeated Bullets 41-30 powered by the 19-point performance of Marg Hagarat.

Lori Muchowski also had 12 points for Long Shots who led 28-19 at the half. Louise Courdaine, with 18 points, was tops for Rebels in a losing cause.

Shirley Fowler had 10 points for Basket Cases who led 15-10 at half time. Sue Lewis, with seven, was high scorer for Bullets.

The win was the first in four starts for Basket Cases who move ahead of Bullets in the battle for the cellar in the league. Long Shots lead the league.



BADMINTON TOURNNEY (Daily News Photo)

Brian O'Keefe, of Vernon, showed his form on the weekend during a semi-final matchup with Summerland's Kevin Hancock in the men's singles category. O'Keefe

defeated Hancock in an extra points game to advance to the final of the men's division during the North Okanagan Open Badminton Tournament, at VSS.