

Kowal and Kapicki lead Lakers with hustle



By JIM JUDD
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One thought that no doubt passed through the minds of Vernon hockey fans on numerous occasions has also been a dream of every coach that has taken charge of the local squad during the past three years.

If everyone on the team would just play with the intensity of Greg Kowal and Nick Kapicki the team would be unbeatable.

The fans, not to mention current coach Don Moores, may have finally gotten that wish. Anyone who attended the last two home games would agree.

Lakers put together two of the most dedicated, intense performances ever in earning victories of 6-1 and 6-2 over Revelstoke Rangers and Penticton Knights, respectively.

HARD WORK

The result proved an old adage that Kapicki and Kowal have lived by all their hockey lives . . . talent is one thing, but there's just no substitute for hard work. Over the past three seasons the two local players have struggled to pass the message on to their team-mates, but it seems the idea has only just recently caught fire with the rest of the club.

It is hard to say just what has kept Kowal and Kapicki motivated over the years, but suffice it to say their presence has been a blessing for the Vernon junior team over the past three seasons. On any given night

either one of these guys is worth the price of admission.

Now in their final seasons, the pair of long-time friends and team-mates are working harder than ever to achieve the ultimate goal before their junior hockey careers come to an end . . . retirement sets in early in junior hockey.

When the season began, Kowal expressed a rather understated wish that he might score 40 goals this season. The bottom line for Kowal, as always, was that the team do well of course, regardless of whether he could live up to his own expectations.

46 GOALS

Kowal has more than lived up to his own expectations. With five games remaining in the regular season, the spirited winger has scored 46 times. Throughout the current campaign, Kowal, who was rightly named captain at the outset of the season, has remained the team's most consistent and prolific scorer. In fact, there were many nights that the diminutive redhead carried the entire team on his back, or shared the load with Kapicki. There were times when they were successful, but there were times when the weight of the whole team was even too much of a burden for their broad shoulders.

Patience and virtue have paid off handsomely for them. With 18 other players turning in similar performances, the club has proved to be unstoppable against the toughest the league has to offer.

Even though lakers have made the transition from a struggling squad to a contending team, Kowal and Kapicki remain the heart and soul of the team. Anyone who remembers Vernon Lakers in years to come won't be able to do so without remembering these two. If heart and soul were food, these guys could end the famine in Ethiopia and still have enough left over to carry their team to victory.

Though small in stature, Kapicki has, over the course of the past three seasons, forged himself into one of the most distinguished and toughest centremen in the entire BCJHL.

ALL-STAR

Twice an all-star, Kapicki, as with Kowal, earned his reputation in the corners just the same as he did in front of the net. The feisty centre also subscribed to the "walk softly and carry a big stick" adage early in his career but even that aside, it's only the most foolhardy newcomer to the league that would try to intimidate Kapicki.

The example set by Kowal and Kapicki has obviously been infectious.

Hockey, like any sport, carries a certain manifesto that this pair of local lads have always adhered to . . . defeat is a personal thing but victory is shared by everyone.

It's a legacy that Kowal and Kapicki will leave Lakers when they graduate the ranks this year.