

Lakers lead playoff series



VERNON LAKERS' CENTRE Frank Dutoff splits the Merritt defence during the opening game of their best-of-

seven BCJHL quarter final series, Tuesday night, at Vernon Civic Arena. Lakers drew first blood in the series with

an 8-5 victory over Centennials. Game two takes place Thursday night in Merritt.

(Daily News Photo)

Fulton faces Houston at hoop championships

Fulton Maroons clash with Houston, tonight, in opening round play at the British Columbia 'A' Boys Basketball Championships, in Pitt Meadows.

Sixteen teams will battle for the B.C. title during the next four days.

Maroons, who placed second in the recent valley finals, are ranked seventh going into the provincial tourney. But, at this point, rankings mean nothing.

"The only thing that counts is what we do in the next four days," said Fulton Coach Nick Nedelkovitch. "I feel we're sharp and we're as healthy as we've been in the past month."

The only Fulton player who isn't at 100 per cent is Doug Short, who is sidelined with a dislocated knee.

Maroons, who are favored to defeat ninth-ranked Houston, will probably take on second-ranked D. P. Todd, of Prince George, in second round action.

Nedelkovitch rates Oliver Hornets, D. P. Todd, and West Vancouver as the teams to beat.

"We defeated Todd 68-54 in the final game at the Pitt Meadows Tournament," said Nedelkovitch, "but that score wasn't indicative of the play. It was a close game until we started pulling away in the last few minutes."

Oliver, which downed Maroons 65-51 in the Okanagan championship, is the top-ranked squad. However, the prospect of meeting Hornets in Pitt Meadows doesn't worry Nedelkovitch.

He said, "I don't think the loss to Oliver hurt us all season and now we know what to expect."

Hornets and several other teams are taller than

Maroons, but the Vernon squad makes up for lack of height with aggressive play.

"We can't hide it ... our weakness is lack of height," Nedelkovitch said. "When we come up against a tall team, we have to outwork them."

"On the positive side, everybody on our club can contribute. We don't have to worry about one or two guys carrying the load for us ... we have nine guys who can do the job."

West Vancouver is ranked third followed by University Hill (Vancouver), Campbell River, Pitt Meadows, Fulton, Bethel Christian (Dawson Creek), Houston, Mount Sentinel (Slocan), Prince Charles (Creston), St. Mikes (Victoria), Aldergrove, George Pringle (Westbank), Nechako Valley (Vanderhoof), and Sentinel (West Vancouver).

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

FEBRUARY, 1980

Ken Haller's goal at 7:03 of overtime lifted Grindrod Elks to a 4-3 victory over Winfield Raiders in North Okanagan Hockey League quarter-final playoff action in Enderby. Grindrod

forced the overtime by pulling goalie Bucky Georgetti and having Geoff Collins knot the count with just 16 seconds left in regulation time. It was the second goal of the game for Collins.

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports
Vernon Lakers drew first blood in what's obviously going to be a long, tough battle between themselves and Merritt Centennials in their best-of-seven BCJHL quarter final playoff series.

Lakers got two goals each from veterans Scott Young and Gord Simpson to defeat Centennials 8-5, at Vernon Civic Arena, Tuesday night. Game two of the series takes place Thursday night in Merritt.

Playing without the services of star centre Nick Kapicki, sidelined with a concussion, Lakers lost three key players in the second period following a controversial decision by BCJHL head referee Ron Renneberg. He ejected the Vernon players who had not dropped their gloves during a fracas.

It was a move which didn't sit too well with Vernon coach Don Moores, despite the fact that he was able to hold on for the win without four players.

"Obviously we lost key players and they (Merritt) didn't lose much and it really hurt us," Moores said. "Simpson, (Jason) Phillips and (Shawn) Lofroth are definitely key players."

However, Moores didn't let Renneberg's decision bother him too long.

"We were looking for the first win (in the series)," explained Moores. "We really needed it and we got it."

Lakers came on like gangbusters in the early going jumping to a 2-1 first period lead although with the 20 shots they pelted Merritt goaltender Bob Romano with, it could just as easily have been a three or four goal lead.

Vernon followed its first period heroics with more of the same in the second frame scoring four consecutive goals to take a 6-1 lead and reducing Centennials to a confused state.

But a pair of quick goals in the latter part of the middle period, by Pat Ryan, narrowed the gap to 6-3.

A quick goal by Merritt, just 44 seconds into the third frame, further narrowed the gap and it wasn't until Stacey Hartnell blasted a quick, low shot past Romano at 17:14 that Lakers took control once again.

Another goal, less than a minute later, reduced Vernon's lead to two goals again but captain Greg Kowal's goal into an empty net insured the club of a well-deserved victory.

Wes Gentles and Shannon Pohl also had goals for Lakers while Ryan ended up with three on the night for Centennials along with assists on goals by Neil Eisenhutt and Alan Wall.

Despite their intense efforts, Lakers were guilty of a number of mental errors in the game and mistakes can prove costly in playoff hockey if they aren't corrected.

"We looked at the score

and we were up 6-1 and we unconsciously let up," explained Moores. "It let them back into the game."

In the other BCJHL Interior Division playoff Tuesday night, it was no contest as Penticton Knights demolished Summerland Buckaroos 16-3.

John DePourcq led Knights with four goals, Scott Rawson had three, Murray Winnicki and Todd Brost two apiece.

Mike Barzal had a pair of the Bucks while Craig Bedard added a single.

Game two of that series, which takes place in Summerland, also goes Thursday night.

Major hits 100-point mark

Vernon native Bruce Major hit the 100-point plateau in his second season in the BCJHL with a goal and two assists to lead Richmond Sockeyes past Nanaimo Clippers 9-5, Tuesday.

In other games in the Coastal Division, Abbotsford Flyers downed Sidney Capitals 6-4 as the teams closed out the regular season schedule.

Bill Adams scored three for Richmond who were playing at home and will host third-place Abbotsford in the first game of their best-of-seven, BCJHL quarter-final series tonight.

Nanaimo and Sidney finished the regular season out of playoff contention.

In addition to Major, Sockeyes got goals from Ben Biagioni, Peter Gill, Mike Scardina, Keith Street and Dave Holmes, as they led 2-0 and 5-2 by periods.

Johnson honored

NEW YORK (AP) — Magic Johnson, who averaged 19.3 points and 13.9 assists in leading Los Angeles Lakers to an 11-2 record, was named on Tuesday the National Basketball Association's player of the month for February.

The six-foot-eight guard's best performance was Feb. 17 when he led the Lakers to a 117-111 win over Boston Celtics, scoring a season-high 37 points and adding 13 assists.

Other nominees were Buck Williams of New Jersey Nets, Larry Bird of the Celtics, Bernard King of New York Knicks, Mark Aguirre of Dallas Mavericks, Mark Eaton of Utah Jazz and Ralph Sampson of Houston.



BRUCE MAJOR

... reaches milestone

Scott King made 23 saves in goal for Richmond which Frank Furlan stopped 33 for Nanaimo.

Details of Abbotsford-Sidney game were not available.