

Lakers looking for an early end



WESTERN STYLE BONSPIEL

Demonstrating the look for their Annual Silver Star Bonspiel are three members of Vernon Ladies' Curling Club, left to right; Lynn

Severin, Sherry Walters, and Sharon Derry. This year's theme for the 'spiel is a Western one as the cowboy hats would indicate. The

bonspiel gets underway March 15 and 16 at Vernon Curling Club.

(Daily News Photo)

One word would describe the BCJHL quarter-final series to date between Vernon Lakers and Merritt Centennials ... unpredictable.

Nothing more or less can be said about tonight's fifth game which takes place at Vernon Civic arena except that it is becoming a must-win situation for both teams with just three games remaining and only one team to go on to face Penticton Knights for the Interior Division title.

Both teams have earned a win at home and on the road so far.

Lakers started the series on a winning note earning a 7-4 victory over Centennials at Civic arena in game one but suffered back-to-back defeats at the hands of Centennials in games two and three. Among those losses was a disappointing 6-0 loss on Merritt's home-ice and an equally disappointing 9-8 loss on home ice in game three.

However, on the strength of a brilliant 3-1 victory Sunday night in Merritt, Lakers could have the momentum and confidence they need to roll over Centennials and win the series.

Meanwhile, Lakers' coach Don Moores is less concerned about the inconsistency his club has shown in their first four games of the series, than he is in simply winning the best-of-seven en-

counter with the stubborn Merritt squad.

"I'm not concerned about the inconsistency," explained Moores. "I just want them to come to play hockey."

Sunday's victory saw the emergence of goaltender Frank Romeo as a solid performer between the pipes. It's likely Moores will go with the veteran performer in net tonight for game five since Romeo has proven his worth down the home stretch and in games one and four. Romeo came to Lakers at mid-season in a deal with Revelstoke Rangers.

Lakers have also suffered from a lack of centre icemen in this series but at least part of that trouble will be rectified tonight when veteran centre Nick Kapicki steps back onto the ice for the first time in more than two weeks.

Kapicki was sidelined after the final game of the regular season in which he suffered a concussion in a pre-game brawl in Merritt. Kapicki's speed and puck-handling ability will make a noticeable difference to Lakers who also lost the services of speedy forward Gord Simpson in the first game of the playoffs. Simpson has an injured knee and will likely remain out of action for the duration of the playoffs.

Maroons fell short in basketball bid

Fulton Maroons fell the championship playoff the season but we're look-

Kapicki case is bush league



By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

You might say there's been no love lost between Nick Kapicki and the Merritt Centennials during Kapicki's three-year sojourn through the BCJHL.

But if the fiesty little centre had any respect for the Merritt crew prior to their final regular season game in Merritt two weeks ago, rest assured he certainly has none now.

For those as yet unenlightened about Kapicki's unwarranted bodily attack that night, I'll reiterate.

As Nick described the incident, he was one of the first to challenge the Centennials who were cruising from Lakers' blueline to their own goal during warm-ups. To the uniformed this is a clear indication that an opposing team is challenging your intestinal fortitude before a game.

Unfortunately, what Kapicki failed to realize at the time was that the Centennials had dressed 24 players for their warm-up whereas Lakers motored into Merritt that evening with 16 skaters and a pair of goaltenders. Being outnumbered at any time means trouble but as Custer would have told you at the Little Bighorn, there are times when you just know your number is up.

To make a long story short, Kapicki went down at his own blueline after colliding with Centennials' Brad Smiley. Expecting a physical confrontation upon this collision, Kapicki dropped stick and gloves and assumed the fighting position.

THREE PLAYERS

What Kapicki didn't expect was three players to jump him and hang a beating on him.

The result of that event left Kapicki with a concussion and a broken nose. He should consider himself lucky, I suppose, the alternative was probably an unmerciful death at the hands of three madmen had it not been for the selfless act of rescue performed by team-mate Al Young. Young hurled himself into the centre of the melee, covered the unconscious Kapicki with his own body, and suffered a similar beating at the hands of the same three players.

Now this is the kind of thing which happens in junior hockey from time to time, if you can believe it, but what makes this particular tale so incredible is the fact that both the referee-in-chief of the league and the president of the

BCJHL were in attendance. Both bore witness to the fracas that went on.

What's even more incredible is that neither decided to pursue the matter any further as a result of a quick meeting held an evening later.

FIFTH GAME

In the meantime, Kapicki is only just preparing to return to the Lakers' lineup for tonight's fifth game in the best-of-seven series with Centennials.

It's no coincidence that it happened to be the highest scoring player on the Vernon roster who was the subject of the attack. When these things take place they're always aimed at some player in particular. The absence of Kapicki could have made the difference in at least one of the four games which have taken place to date in the series. Anybody that averaged a point and a half per game is sorely missed by any club.

Even more disturbing than the actual act, however, is the lack of proper action on behalf of the league. In any other hockey league on the continent there would have been an inquiry and at least a handful of lengthy suspensions. In most cases the RCMP would have been involved and formal charges laid.

BUSH LEAGUE

The fact that nothing was done, however, earmarks the BCJHL as one of the true "Bush Leagues" of the Junior Hockey circuit in this country. You get a reputation like that and it takes a long time to get shed of it.

Short of killing or maiming a fellow player just what has to transpire in this league before anything is done. Even if Kapicki had initiated the fracas, which isn't the case, can there be any justification for a three-on-one fight to occur before the game has even started?

As for Merritt Centennials, well, when you face a player like Kapicki for three years it becomes apparent that you have to find some way to contain him, if not in the game then any way you can.

Knowing Kapicki for as long as I have, I know one thing for sure however. He'll be back and when he does he'll be ready to wield his personal philosophy against the Centennials.

He doesn't get mad. He just gets even.