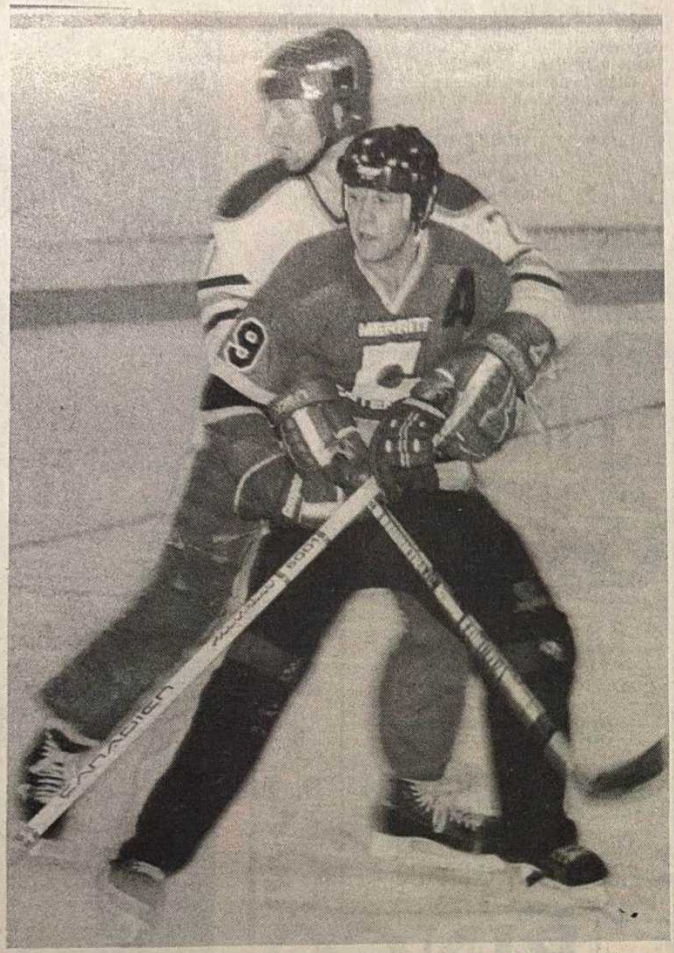
MERRITT WINS SERIES

Lakers run out of steam



Vernon Lakers' defenceman Tony Christie puts the grab on Merritt Centennials' toughman Mark Bogoslowski during Thursday night's seventh and deciding game in the best-of-seven quarter-final matchup at Civic arena. Lakers ran out of steam mid-way through the game and Centennials skated to a convincing 10-4 victory and will now meet Penticton Knights in the Interior Division final.

(Daily News Photo)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

In the climatic game of a gruelling seven game series with Merritt Centennials, Vernon Lakers had just one good period of hockey left in them. Unfortunately it wasn't enough to combat the doggedly determined Centennials who managed a convincing 10-4 victory over Lakers Thursday night at Civic arena.

The victory enables Merritt to advance to the BCJHL semifinal series against Penticton Knights for the Interior Division championship.

Lakers were masters at the helm for the first 20 minutes of Thursday's encounter, outshooting Centennials 18-7, out-hustling the visitors and out-hitting them. They promptly ran out of steam early in the second frame, however, leaving Centennials to expend the last of their failing energy in securing their first playoff series victory in almost 10 years.

Lakers trailed the visitors 2-1 after 20 minutes, a fact which, in view of the way they outplayed Centennials, broke their spirit to go on as much as their drained bodies refused to enable them.

Centennials left the ice with a 5-2 lead after 40 minutes and added four quick goals to their lead early in the third period to put the game out of reach.

Given their due, however, Merritt came to play hockey Thursday night and proved they deserved their victory with their hard work and absence of the chippy style of play which has been their characteristic since the series began.

The hard-hitting pace of the seven games proved to work in the visitors' favor by Thursday night. It was obvious that Lakers had simply run out of steam by the time the second period rolled around.

"We didn't quit," sighed Lakers' coach Don Moores in retrospect of the series. "We took a lot of crap in this series and we stayed in it to the end.

"We dominated the first period but we were down 2-1 and it was really nobody's fault," added Moores. "Things got bad and then they got progressively worse."

Lakers went out with dignity too. Vernon captain Greg Kowal, always a relentless worker, scored twice in the late going to provide a small spark of hope for the 1500 fans on hand. It was too little, too late, but the courage and determination Kowal exhibited summed up the attitude of the team in forcing the series into seven games.

Wes Gentles accounted for Vernon's first goal, a short-handed effort at 16:30 of the first period while Daryl Weinberger's tally on a clean break early in the second frame tied the score at 2-2.

John Tent, one of the few Merritt natives with the club, scored twice as did veteran Pat Ryan. Other Centennials' marksmen included Kevin Cheveldave, Brad Smiley, Neil Eisenhut, Drew Turko, Randy McFarlane, and Mark Bogoslowski.

Jim Young and Frank Romeo combined to block 37 or 47 drives while Bob Romano made 39 saves for Merritt.

In other BCJHL action Thursday night, Abbotsford Flyers won their best-of-seven series with Richmond Flyers by defeating the hometown Richmond squad 2-1.

Chris Anderson and Rod Summers scored for Abbotsford and Don Rintala had the lone Richmond goal. Flyers go on to meet Burnaby Bluehawks in the Coastal Division final matchup.

PANTHERS WINNERS

Okanagan teams stifled in provincial title bid

The second day of competition at the B.C. Boys High School "AA" Basketball Championship proved as costly to the Okanagan contingent as day one did Friday.

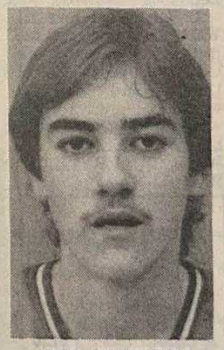
While Vernon Panthers stayed alive with an 86-80 victory over Prince Rupert, Penticton Lakers, number one ranked team in the tournament and the last hope for a provincial title for an Okanagan high school team, were upset 98-87 by Kilarney of Vancouver.

While Vernon coach Dave Jackson was pleased at the performance of his own club in earning their victory over Prince Rupert, his heart went out to the Penticton squad at the same time.

"I know how they (Penticton) felt, because I was dragging myself around yesterday (Thursday) after we lost and I didn't want to talk to anyone," said Panthers coach Jackson. "It was worse for them because they thought it was their year."



BRIAN KRUGER
. . . scored 21



ROD CHARLTON
. . . 20 points

Panthers had a tight game against Prince Rupert, trailing 44-43 at the half before opening up a little breathing space later in the game.

"We opened it up more in the third quarter but it was fairly close all the way," said Jackson. "They (Prince Rupert) shot very well.

Brian Kruger turned in a sterling performance for the Vernon hoop squad with 21 points while Rod Charlton flashed brilliance with his 20 points, and Ted Vanderwal showed good things to come with his 18 points.

Willis Parnell was top gun for Prince Rupert. The point guard for the B.C. Selects team last summer hit for 22 points.

Panthers advance to the playoff round today with a game against John Oliver at 10 a.m. If Panthers win they play the winner between D.W. Poppy and Correlieu of Quesnel.

In other action at the B.C. High School Basketball Championship Thursday, Centennial Centaurs defeated Oak Bay Bays 76-65, Abbotsford beat Windsor Dukes of North Vancouver 79-67, Richmond downed North Surrey Spartans 85-72, Quesnel defeated Vancouver College 83-80, D.W. Poppy of Langley defeated J.L. Crowe Hawks of Trail 80-57, and John Oliver Jokers of Vancouver pounded Blemont Braves of Victoria 83-63.

Richmond Colts play Abbotsford Panthers and Killarney Cougars of Vancouver meet Centennial Centaurs of Coquitlam today in semi- final games.

Meanwhile, Panthers are pushing for another victory today which wouvd elevate them to a battle for fifth place in the prestigeous tournament.

"If we have a good game we'll be in a position to challenge for fifth place," said Jackson.

Cougars open series with Smoke Eaters

Trail Smoke Eaters will be the visitors but Vernon Cougars have no intention of being civil hosts. At least not on the scoreboard.

The Smokies and Cougars will lock horns tonight at 9 p.m. at the Civic Centre in the first game of a best-of-three Coy Cup playoff series. The local squad hasn't forgotten the outcome the last time the two clubs clashed.

"We had only eight skaters," recalled Cougar manager Gary Swanson, "and we only lost to them 13-5. This time we'll have 19 guys and I'm sure it will make a difference."



GARY SWANSON
. . . a difference

Swanson notes the club had an "excellent" practice Friday and the guys are ready to play. He said he wasn't entirely certain because he isn't the coach but expected Pat Murphy to get the starting nod in goal for the Cougars.

"He has more experience," Swanson said," and this is playoff time. You go with experience at this time of year."

All three games are set for Vernon. Game 2 is slated for 8 p.m. Saturday. If a third game is necessary it will start at 4 p.m. Sunday.

The winner of this series will make the trek to Chilliwack for the next round of the Coy Cup playoffs.

Morgan top performer but in a losing cause

Jack Robinson scored 17 points while teammates Kevin Korol and Marv Friesen added a

the losers with 18 points.

A well-balanced scoring attack which featured a 19-point effort from Bill

every other team member hit the scoreboard in the victory.

Walter Koeler's 17

points, Lorne Hanson with 14, Pat Chemens and Wally Fisher with 12 apiece paced National