

Knights a win away from Centennial Cup

Penticton Knights are just one win away from sweeping their best-of-seven Western Canada final against Estevan Bruins and advancing to the Centennial Cup Junior A Hockey Championship series in Ontario next week.

Not bad for a team Knights' Head Coach Rick Kozuback felt wasn't as good nor as explosive offensively as the team he coached last season.

"From our point of view a lot of our kids have realized their roles this season and have worked hard at them," explained Kozuback whose club has lost just four post-season games in four playoff series. "We're also getting a lot of mileage from kids who saw only spot duty during the regular season . . . it gives us a lot of depth and balance."

Meanwhile, a lot of regular stars with Knights during the season are still pulling their

weight during the playoffs, especially with the Estevan series.

Joe Murphy, leading scorer with the BCJHL this season, scored three times Friday night in Penticton to pace Knights to a 6-3 victory over Bruins and a 3-0 lead in their Western Canada final series. Game four is tonight in Penticton.

Centres Murray Winnicki and Todd Brost along with rugged left-winger Scott Rawson each had a single for Knights who led 4-3 after two periods.

Dean Ehrmantraut, Tim Lecuyer, and Alan May scored for the Saskatchewan champions.

Penticton goalie Grant McPhail stopped 37 shots while Doug Roach made 46 saves for Estevan.

Another surprise for Kozuback in reference to his team is the outstanding defensive work he's received from a basically makeshift defensive unit.

"We've taken forwards who play well defensively and made defencemen out of them," Kozuback said. "They've played very well for us and have passed the puck very well."

Knights have had to contend with a serious difference in size between the two teams in this series.

"They (Bruins) are big kids, as big as any WHL team I've seen," suggested Kozuback. "We're working hard on our game inside the red line . . . we're pressing them hard in their zone."

Should Knights win tonight they will advance to the four-team round robin series that will end with the best-two teams competing in the Centennial Cup final. The other teams include Aurora Tigers, of Aurora, Ont., Orillia Travelways, of Orillia, Ont., and the winner of the Cole Harbour-Pembroke series.