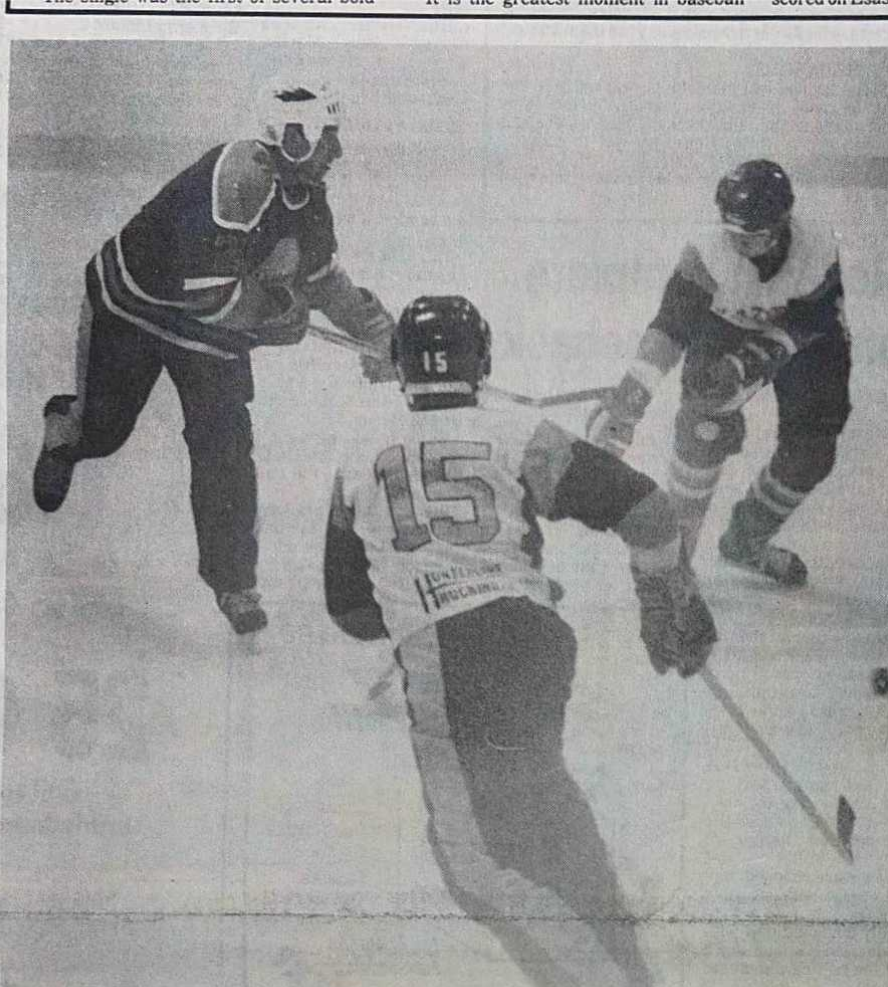




VERNON LAKERS' forward Doug Spooner, left, not only had to contend with two Shuswap defenders, he also had to find the puck in the fog

during Wednesday night's BCJHL exhibition game in Enderby. The condensation in the air caused fog, in varying degrees, throughout the

game. Spooner, in his first season with Lakers, scored one goal and set up another to help his club record a 6-3 victory. (Daily News Photo)

CANUCKS OPTIMISTIC

New bosses at helm

VANCOUVER (CP) — A changing of the guard, with Jack Gordon in control of the front office and Tom Watt having on-ice responsibility, has left Vancouver Canucks cautiously optimistic as they approach their 16th season in the National Hockey League.

With training camp less than a week away, Gordon is director of hockey operations and general manager; Watt is head coach and assistant general manager.

They were selected to pick up the pieces after a disastrous 59-point season in 1984-85 that left the Canucks last in the Smythe

Division, 23 points out of the playoffs.

The massive reorganization came just three years after the Canucks played in their only Stanley Cup final. General manager Harry Neale, who also coached the final 60 games last season after firing rookie coach Bill LaForge, was fired and subsequently became head coach of Detroit Red Wings.

Watt, who began his pro coaching career five years ago with the Canucks as an assistant to Neale, returns to the NHL after being dumped by Winnipeg Jets in

November 1983. He says he wants to develop an identity for the often faceless Canucks.

"I want this team to develop its own style of play," Watt said Wednesday.

DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

"I hope we can develop the confidence in ourselves that will make us a better team."

Watt, 50, performed a minor miracle in 1981-82 when he became head coach in Winnipeg and the Jets improved by 48 points. Watt was named coach of the year but 18 months later he was unemployed.

Local players star for Lakers

By DON KENALL
Daily News Sports Editor

Throughout their minor hockey careers in Vernon, Troy Mick and Dennis Holland recorded some impressive scoring statistics.

The slick duo was always among the top scorers in the Okanagan and in recent years drew attention at the provincial level. Now, they are threatening to continue their scoring heroics at the junior 'A' level.

Mick scored two goals while Holland scored once and added an assist to lead Vernon Lakers to a 6-3 win over Shuswap Blazers in B.C. Junior Hockey League pre-season action, Wednesday night, in Enderby. Last Saturday, in their exhibition opener, Lakers thumped Blazers 10-3.

Mick, who split the 1984-85 season between Vernon Midget Reps and Lakers, got both his goals on powerplays. Holland, in his first season of junior, scored the prettiest goal of the night. The centreman stickhandled around a Shuswap defenceman, faked a shot, got Blazers' netminder Ken Wilcox on his back, and then flipped the puck into the top of the net.

"They (Mick and Holland) played well," said Lakers' Coach Don Moores. "They'll help us a lot this season."

The teams were tied 1-1 at the end of the first period and Lakers held a 5-2 lead after the second.

Greg Guest, Doug Spooner, and Shannon Pohl were the other Vernon marksmen.

Brad Wolgemuth, Terry Bostad, and Jeff Vilac replied for Blazers.

Moores was pleased with his club's performance in the final 40 minutes after a shaky first period. "It was the first game for some of our veterans and they were nervous in the first period," Moores said. "We made a lot of mistakes early in the game but seemed to settle

down as the night went on.

"We missed a lot of chances ... the score could have been much more lopsided."

Two newcomers on the Vernon blue line corps drew praise from their coach. "(Rick) Rozecki and (Kevin) Horn had strong games," Moores said. "They did a good job in our end of the rink."

Horn spent the 1984-85 season with Revelstoke (now Delta) of the BCJHL, while Rozecki played with the Coquitlam Juvenile Reps.

Blue Smith, who gave up one goal in 29 minutes, and Terry Forsythe shared the netminding duties for Vernon. Both goalies made several good stops, but Forsythe was victimized by a shot between his legs, by Bostad, with less than eight minutes remaining in the third period.

Moores had eight members of his 1984-85 club on the ice with another six veterans also on the roster. Stacey Hartnell (flu), Murray Baron (flu), Chris Saunders (broken wrist), Shawn Lofroth (broken

wrist) and Al Young (broken finger) were unavailable. Goalie Frank Romeo sat out the game so the coaches could look at Smith and Forsythe.

Two other members of last year's club, Daryl Weinberger (Calgary) and Jason Phillips (Brandon), are still at Western Hockey League training camps.

Lakers continue their pre-season schedule with a home-and-home series this weekend with defending Western Canada champions Penticton Knights. First game is Friday night in Penticton with the return match Saturday night at the Vernon Civic Arena.

Moores doesn't rule out the possibility of rough games with the Knights. "I'm sure they'll be playing tough," he said. "I'm sure they've got some guys who will be trying to impress their coaches. And there is quite a rivalry between our two clubs."

Hartnell and Baron are expected to play this weekend, but none of the other injured players will be ready for at least another week.

ASK AL

Yankees go home



By AL PATERSON
Daily News Sports

There are few things in this world as obnoxious as a true-blue New York Yankees fan.

I know because there is one such fan in the Vernon Daily News. To make matters worse, he's also the sports editor but we needn't go into names, right? Our friend has even taken to coming into the office on his days off to inform me of all the latest Yankee developments.

Now it's fine with me for a guy to root for his team but that Yankee grin he sports drives me buggy. Why just this week he made sure I knew that Phil Niekro won seven in a row. And that Ron Guidry won nine of his last 10 starts on the hill for the Yanks.

I'm sick and tired of hearing about how many RBI's Don Mattingly has. This play-by-play stuff has to stop. I dread coming into the office on days when the Yankees win. The man has no mercy. I don't overreact, but...