

Lakers overcome deficit to defeat Packers 5-3

Specialty teams, particularly the power-play, dominated the B.C. Junior Hockey League season opener between Kelowna Packers and Vernon Lakers Friday night in Kelowna.

Lakers scored three unanswered second period goals, all during man-advantage situations, en route to a come-from behind 5-3 victory over hometown Packers. Packers notched a pair of power-play markers in the first period while Lakers added a short-handed tally in the third frame.

Meanwhile, as anticipated, the game was a penalty-filled affair even though it was a cleanly contested outing by both clubs. Officials heaped 67 penalty minutes on the two clubs with all but five minutes of them coming from minor infractions. The officiating didn't sit too well with Packers' coach Wayne Naka who desperately wanted a victory in his fledgling club's inaugural game.

"Too many penalties," exclaimed Naka. "You can't win a game spending half the game in the penalty box."

Packers jumped out front early in the game with a 2-0 lead which stood up through the first period. Lakers battled back with their three power-play goals in the second and never looked back. The local club stretched their lead to 5-2 late in the game before Packers put their third tally on the scoreboard.

"The second half killed us when we took a lot of penalties," explained Naka whose last coaching stint in Summerland saw him take the Buckaroos all the way to the Interior Division final.

Doug Spooner, formerly with the Peace-Cariboo Junior Hockey League, scored twice for Lakers and assisted on all three of the others which were scored by Dennis Holland, Rick Rozecki and Shannon Pohl. (Packers, outshot 35-32, got goals from Wade Stubbley, Ward Carlson and Alan Schuler).

Lakers, who play their first five games of the season on the road, will next see action Tuesday night when they travel to Penticton to take on the Centennial Cup finalist Knights.

Knights also won their season opener Friday night with a 6-1 victory over visiting Merritt Warriors while in other BCJHL action Salmon Arm Blazers doubled visiting Nanaimo Clippers 10-5.

Knights got two goals from sophomore David Shields while singles came from Rod Summers, Al Novakowski, Guy Phaneuf and Trevor Pochipinski. Mark Greyeyes was the Merritt scorer.

Salmon Arm got two each from Terrance Head and Kent Maltais. Kevin Nohr, Richard VanRy, Darcy Allison, Harry Basi, Marty and Murray Yewchuk had singles. Clippers got goals from Lawrence Amy, Mike Knapton, Darren Biggs, and two from Brian DeLeeuw.