

Lakers snatch defeat from jaws of victory

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

To coin a new twist of an old phrase, Vernon Lakers snatched defeat from the jaws of victory Sunday night in B.C. Junior Hockey League action at the Civic Arena.

Penticton Knights scored three unanswered third-period goals to overcome a 5-4 deficit and earn a 7-5 victory against Lakers.

The game meant nothing to the standings with Knights and Lakers occupying first and third places, respectively, in the BCJHL Interior Division.

The turning point in the game came at roughly the halfway mark just after centre Dennis Holland had set up Murray Baron for his third power-play goal of the night and the Vernon team had taken a commanding 5-3 lead.

The loss overshadowed an heroic effort by Holland who scored once and added four assists to vault him over the

100-point plateau in his rookie season with Lakers. The slick centre now has 42 goals, 61 assists and 103 points.

However, an outright giveaway by Lakers' allowed Knights to close to within a goal just 50 seconds after Baron's third tally.

Ironically, Lakers' troubles worsened just when it appeared things were looking darkest for Penticton. Knights were assessed a five-minute major for slashing and followed that immediately with a double minor penalty leaving the visitors short-handed for a full four minutes.

Knights had little difficulty thwarting the feeble attack Lakers tried to muster during their five-on-three advantage. A short-handed tally by Greg Cyr tied the game at 5-5 at the midway point of the period.

David Shields' second goal of the game, on a Knights' power-play, gave Penticton its winning margin while

Aaron Scott put the icing on the cake with a goal at 17:47.

Trevor Pohl accounted for Lakers' other goal while Chris Anderson, Kevin Therrien, and Marc Rousseau notched singles for Knights.

Naturally, the numerous giveaways, partly responsible for the turn of events on ice Sunday, didn't sit well with Lakers' Coach Mike Enemark.

"Against Penticton you can't afford giveaways in your own end and that's what we did all night long," he explained.

Giveaways weren't the only cause of Lakers' problems. The local club simply stopped skating halfway through the game.

Knights also pushed Lakers' defence right back into the lap of goaltender Scott King who made quite a number of outstanding saves despite facing just 27 shots during the game. Vernon managed 29 drives against Warren Sharples.

"The defence backed in because the forwards weren't coming back," suggested Enemark. "It won't correct itself overnight either. We'll have to work on our zone play."

If the loss surprised many of the fans on hand Sunday night, none were more surprised than Kelowna Packers' Coach Wayne Naka who was utilizing the opportunity to scout his two major rivals in the division. Naka suggested it was a lack of confidence displayed by Lakers. Enemark concurred.

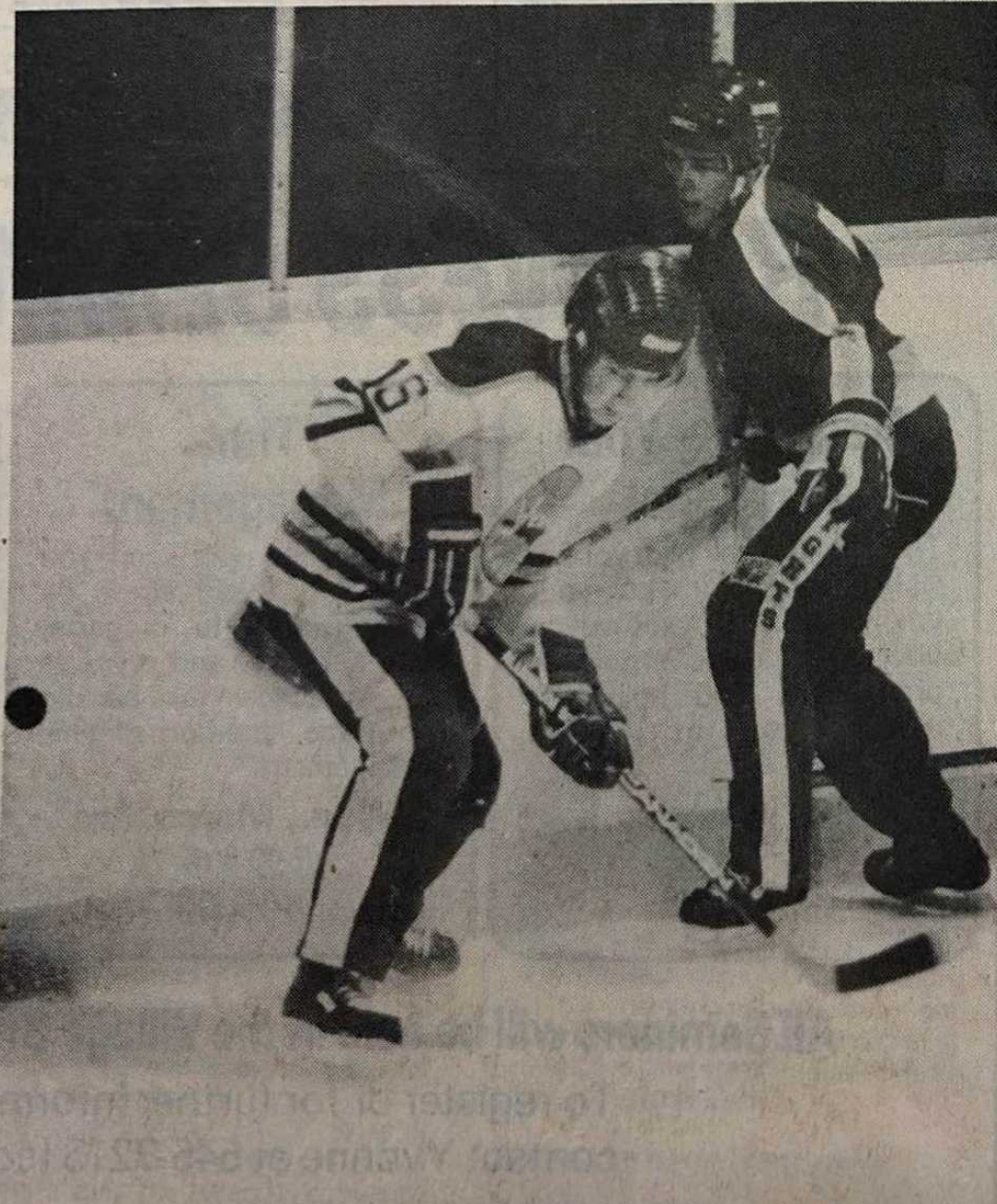
"I don't think we have confidence in ourselves," he said. "Penticton didn't beat us as much as we gave it (game) to them . . . that's twice this weekend we did it (gave the game away) and we'll have to change our attitudes."

Enemark was referring to Friday night's contest in Kelowna in which the club also lost a lead.

Saturday night, four players scored three goals as Vernon bombed visiting Shuswap Blazers 14-5. Holland, Steve Humphrey, Troy and Trevor Pohl had three apiece. Holland added three assists as did Trevor Pohl, while Troy had four helpers. Al Young and Greg Guest accounted for the other goals while Marty and Murray Yewchuk, Ross Elm, Jeff Kentell and Richard Van Ry replied for Blazers.

In other BCJHL action Sunday night, Summerland Buckaroos outlasted Shuswap Totems 11-8, Richmond Sockeyes blasted Langley Eagles 9-1, and Delta Flyers beat Abbotsford Falcons 6-4.

Next action is Tuesday when Richmond is at Abbotsford, Delta is at Nanaimo and Merritt visits Summerland. Lakers' next game is Thursday night, in Merritt, while the local club closes out the regular season Friday in Penticton.



A LOOSE PUCK floats in mid-air as Vernon Lakers' centre Steve Humphrey checks a Penticton defenceman in the corner during B.C. Junior Hockey League play, Saturday night, at the Civic Arena. Lakers lost a lead and dropped a 7-5 decision to the league-leading Knights.

(Daily News Photo)