

Penticton explodes during third period

By The Canadian Press

In the end, it was just a matter of time for Penticton Knights.

The Knights wore down Kelowna Packers with seven third-period goals Tuesday night in a 12-4 victory that sent them into the B.C. Junior Hockey League final against Richmond Sockeyes.

The Sockeyes advanced with a 5-2 victory over Delta Flyers as both finalists won their best-of-seven semifinal rounds in five games.

"In the first two periods we thought it was a very close game," said Penticton coach Rick Kozuback. "It was a struggle.

"But if you keep playing a system and you keep persevering, in the end you should come through. It was just a matter of time before our guys built enough momentum to generate some offence.

"Once they did that, it was just a matter of time before Kelowna ran out of steam."

Defenceman Kevan Melrose, who scored two of Penticton's three second-period goals and assisted on the other, agreed with his coach.

"After the first period I thought they came to play but our team can be explosive and in the third period we came out to play and I think we knew who the better team was.

"From the third period we played excellent hockey. We are going to be ready for the next series."

Knights 12 Packers 4

Bill Thomas scored three goals and added two assists — all in the third period — to lead the Knights who were tied 2-2 after the first period and led 5-3 after 40 minutes.

James Burnett matched Melrose with two goals for Penticton which outshot the losers 54-25. Kevin Therrien, Laine Jeannotte, John DePourcq, Greg Guidinger and David Shields also scored for Penticton.

Pat Mangold, Mike Murinko, Jamie Kurki and Darren Schwartz replied for the Packers.

Sockeyes 5 Flyers 2

Sean Harder scored twice to lead the Coastal Division champions while Richard Brew, Jeff Crossley and Jim Butterworth added the other goals.

The Flyers, who were outshot 40-30, got their goals from Ben Biagioni and Todd Decker.

"I think that it'll be a hell of a series," Richmond coach Muzz MacPherson said of the championship rematch between the Sockeyes and the Knights.

"We know they're tough at home — they've only lost one game in two years in that building. When two good hockey clubs meet you always have an entertaining brand of hockey. Whoever wins it will have to play physical."

Dates for the final series have not been announced.

Long season hurts champion

May be B.C. Junior Hockey League isn't the most cleverly-run organization in the country, but sooner or later they'll wake up to the fact their season is ridiculously long. . .and what a revelation that'll be.

Maybe it's not that the regular season is too lengthy, but certainly the playoff schedule needs some serious attention if for no other reason than to give the BCJHL champions a legitimate chance to contend for the Centennial Cup title.

With a dozen teams and two divisions, the league saunters through a 52-game regular season schedule spread over a six-month period. There are times when teams will go for a week, or more, without playing a single game and other times, such as the extended Christmas vacation that was afforded Vernon Lakers this season, a club will go for a three-week stretch without playing a game.

However the length of the regular season is but a drop in the bucket compared to what could happen to the BCJHL champs if things went badly during playoffs.

Perhaps Penticton Knights can't identify with this observation since they went through little more than the minimum number of games last season en route to the Western Canadian Junior A title and on to the Centennial Cup final.

However, Wayne Naka and his Kelowna Packers know what it's all about right now. Having already survived on gruelling seven-game series with Vernon Lakers in the BCJHL Interior Division semi-final playoff, Packers found themselves hurled into another seven-game series after barely enough time to catch their breath.

The result is a predictable one. Penticton Knights, having cruised through the minimum four-games against Merritt Warriors in their semi-final, were well-rested and sliced through an otherwise worthy opponent with little difficulty.

One would have to wonder why a 52-game season takes six months, but a possible further 26-game post season playoff schedule is compressed into four weeks or less?

Twenty-six games you ask? Well, if each division semi-final and final series went the distance it would



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mean a total of 14 games. Add to this a seven-game series for the BCJHL Championship in the inter-divisional matchup and the total is now 21 games.

But then the BCJHL champ must play a best-of-five series with the winner of the Peace-Cariboo Junior Hockey League. If that were to go the distance, which it never has, it would mean 26 games played just to get out of the province.

Then the real fun begins for the team tough enough to survive that ordeal. The B.C. winner gets to grind it out with the Alberta Junior Hockey champs in another best-of-seven series. . .with full travel between the centres too, I might add. Then that winner takes on the eventual winner of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba series.

If both those series were to go the full measure it would add 14 more games to the post-season schedule. Total now stands at 40 games.

Those 40 games, however, would all have taken place inside of seven weeks. The BCJHL final, in fact, has the Interior Division champ meeting the Coastal Division champ seven times in seven nights. . .again with travel between centres.

The Centennial Cup playoff format has four championship teams from across the country (three regional champs plus the host city) playing a round-robin to determine the two top teams which then play one another for the privilege of calling themselves the best junior A hockey club in the country.

To get back to the main issue, it would be a kindly gesture on behalf of the BCJHL if it can't decrease the number of post-season games played, then perhaps it could speed up the regular season to allow more time to play this horrendous post-season campaign.

B.C. Junior

Richmond 5 Delta 2

(Richmond wins best-of-seven
division final 4-1)

Penticton 12 Kelowna 4

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