Lakers end slump with win over Merritt

By DON KENDALL
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It wasn't pretty to watch, but a win is a win!

Craig Bedard scored at 10:53 of the third period to give Vernon Lakers a 5-4 win over Merritt Warriors in B.C. Junior Hockey League action, Friday night, at the Civic Arena.

The victory ended a four-game losing streak for Lakers and gave the club some much-needed confidence going into a tough weekend. Vernon hosts Penticton Knights, tonight, then travels to Rutland, Sunday, to tangle with Kelowna Packers.

"We won the game, but I wasn't pleased with our performance," said Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare. "We have to play hockey for 60 minutes. You can't take 60 shots and be happy with five goals."

Lakers dominated every aspect of the game, but couldn't pull away from the pesky Warriors.

Campbell Blair, who continues to shine offensively, put Lakers in front with a powerplay goal at 5:36 of the opening period. But, 61 seconds later, Troy McLeod tied the game, on a powerplay, when he picked up an errant clearing pass in front of Vernon netminder Peter Repole.

Lakers regained the lead early in the second period when Mark Greyeyes blasted a wrist shot from the right faceoff circle, after some great hustle by Wes Gentles.

Blair made the score 3-1, at 7:31, when he picked up Doug Spooner's rebound while the teams played five-on-five. At that time, Lakers were completely dominating the game. Centre Kevin Scott was robbed twice from point blank range and Frank Biller rattled a shot off the goalpost. But, as often happens when a team doesn't capitalize on its opportunities, Warriors scored against the flow of the play. Bill Berks narrowed the gap to 3-2, at 14:08, when he beat Repole with a backhander.

Greg Olson restored Vernon's two-goal cushion, at 15:16, when he scored on a slapshot from the point. Before the second period ended, Merritt again closed to within a goal when Alan Suzuki blinked the red light at 19:24.

In the third period, Lakers continued to press. Scott was again thwarted



CRAIG BEDARD GREG GUEST

from in front of the net, Sean Hartnell missed two glorious chances, and Ed Tuckwood put a shot off the post.

Vernon rookie Jeff Kental was penalized for holding, while forechecking, and that gave Merritt the chance it needed. Trent McNabb's point shot, at 7:31, tied the game.

Tuckwood then set up the game winner when he picked up a rebound off the boards and fed it to Bedard, who deflected it past Warriors' netminder Gordon Besse.

Bedard said it felt good to end the team's slump and his own scoring drought. Bedard scored 38 goals last season for Summerland Buckaroos, but he has only three this year and had not scored in five games.

"I've been fighting the puck," Bedard said. "But, I think I'm over that now. I have been working hard in practice and I thought I played well tonight (Friday)."

The veteran forward admits Lakers may not have been mentally prepared in recent games. "We have so much talent on our team that maybe we didn't think we had to work hard to win," he said. "We have found out, if you want to win, you have to work."

Randy Beekhuizen and Besse combined to block 54 shots for Warriors while Repole kicked out 26 shots.

In other BCJHL action Friday, former Vernon Laker Greg Guest scored at 19:19 of the third period, followed by an empty net goal, to give Langley Eagles an 8-6 win over Nanaimo Clippers.

Penticton shutout Richmond Sockeyes 2-0 and Kelowna Packers trounced Summerland 15-1 in the only other games.

Vernon sniper sets record pace

Brent Gilchrist is setting a record-breaking pace in the Western Hockey League.

The Vernon minor hockey graduate scored two goals and added five assists to lead Spokane Chiefs to an 8-7 win over Seattle Thunderbirds, Friday night.

Gilchrist has now scored 14 goals and added 13 assists, for 27 points, in just seven games. At his current pace, he could challenge WHL records for goals and points.

The WHL goal scoring record is held by Ray Ferraro, who scored 108 goals for Brandon Wheat Kings during the 1983-84 season. Ferraro now plays with Hartford Whalers.

Meanwhile, Portland Winter Hawks peppered 66 shots at New Westminster goalie Ray Woodley on route to an 8-4 win over the Bruins.

Two former Vernon players figured prominently in Portland's victory. Centre Dennis Holland scored three goals and added one assist while linemate Troy Mick scored once and set up two others.

Holland has now collected 12 points, including eight assists, in five games. Mick has 10 points, including seven goals.

In other WHL games Friday, Brandon Wheat Kings defeated Calgary 6-2, Saskatoon Blades doubled Prince Albert Raiders 4-2, Regina Pats thumped Moose Jaw Warriors 8-4, and Swift Current Broncos downed Medicine Hat Tigers 8-4.