JUDD'S JOURNAL

November is kind to Vernon Lakers



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It might interest Vernon Lakers and their fans to know that the club has accumulated a number of positive traditions, in addition to some of the less flattering ones.

Sure they stand accused of being first-round patsies come playoff time and traditionally they've not been able to win the big games but who needs all that negative stuff anyway.

November is looming large on the horizon and it has traditionally been a good month for the local hockey club. With a little luck, which I'm not opposed to helping provide myself, Lakers could redeem themselves during the 11th month and possibly place themselves in a position whereby they can make a bid for first place in the B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division.

No doubt the Vernon squad would just as soon forget the month of October, although a strong finish during their swing through the Coastal Division last weekend has been something of a moral boost in itself. Still, October began with four consecutive losses and their attempt at recovery since that time hasn't exactly set the junior hockey world on fire. In fact, it's a good thing Lakers were able to start the season with four consecutive wins because it's the only thing that has held them above the water-line since then. In their past 10 games the club has posted a record of 3-6-1. Now if you happen to live in Summerland or even Merritt (gasp), that sort of a record might be a good enough reason to uncork the team's champagne supply and toast an effort above and beyond the call of duty.

Around here it adds up to a dismal record. In fact, not since the 1984-85 version of the Lakers has the team been so bad during any 10-game stretch.

But hope springs eternal in the knowledge that the friendly month of November is just around the corner. That same 1984-85 team recovered from a poor start by winning eight games during November, but the 1985-86 team really caught fire last November.

That team went undefeated during that glorious month, winning 10 games and tying one other and it was this single burst of energy and emotion during that 30-day stretch that enabled the club to keep a firm hold on third place until the end of the season. For a while, however, the club was in a position to make an honest bid for first place, but strong and consistent play by both Penticton Knight and Kelowna Packers kept the status quo throughout the division for the remainder of the season.

Of course, the club had a helping hand during that long run of success last season and it came from yours truly. Showing a unselfish ability to ignore my own appearance, it was I who refused to shave while Lakers' unbeaten streak continued. From the first win on the first day of that month, until the streak was snapped in early December, I kept the lucky whiskers growing. During that stretch of nearly six weeks, the product almost became a full-fledged beard.

As the whiskers got longer the luck waned, I'll have to admit, but in the early going there was enough luck spilling out of the hairy foliage to cover more than just the Lakers. I actually won two consecutive 50/50 draws and during the same week was a four-number winner in the Lotto 649 draw.

Now one has to ask oneself if that much good fortune can come out of just one man's war on bad luck, then think how greatly the idea could be amplified if hundreds of people were to simultaneously climb on the band wagon.

Of course I'm not about to suggest that everyone should grow a beard since it would be unfair to the younger and female hockey fans in the community. But there are other ways of keeping a lucky streak going. For instance, you can wear the same lucky socks to each game if the team keeps winning. Or it could be a lucky hat or jacket; a lucky color; the place that you park the shirt you wore; the pants, skirt, or sweater you wore when the streak began, who knows for sure.

Anyway, with the Lakers' next victory, how about if as many people as possible try something of this nature to keep the juices flowing. For myself, it will be the beard again. If the club wins Friday night, the kid won't shave again until the team loses. If they lose I'll just have to wait until they win to get the ball rolling.

With any luck, I'll end up with a duplicate of last season's spectacle or perhaps something even longer.

It's a heck of a price to pay to get a team on a winning streak but like they say, somebody's gotta do it.