College coach scouts local prospects

Vernon Daily News | sports

Editor — DON KENDALL

SPORTS BRIEFS

Silver Star opens Friday

Silver Star Mountain will go into daily operation Friday. Silver Star Marketing Director Mike Duggan said the resort received 12 cm of snow overnight, on a 48 cm base. The Town T-Bar and Summit Chairlift will run Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Duggan also reported that the mountain's cross-country trails are open and in good condition. For further information phone 542-0224.

Black powder

Harold Norris, of Spallumcheen, placed first in the men's division at the Monashee Mountain Men's final

pro, is in the third year of a six-year contract.

He leads the NBA in rebounding with a 14.9 average, ranks fifth in NBA scoring with a 26.4 average, se-

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

At any time, it's perfectly normal to find a number of National Hockey League and United States college scouts at a local junior hockey game. But, rarely does one find a coach scrutinizing the latest crop of prospects.

The exception last Friday night, when Lakers hosted Richmond Sockeyes, was Assistant Coach Jay Leach of University of Maine Black Bears, of the East Division of National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Black Bears have made exceptional progress in the NCAA hockey circuit in the three years since Leach and Head Coach Shawn Walsh took over the reigns and a big part of the reason for the Bears' success has been a handful of players who formerly toiled for Vernon Lakers. They include junior Dave Wensley, sophomore Bruce Major, and freshman goaltender Scott King.

A strong start this season has taken Black Bears from last place in their Hockey East Division two seasons ago,



to a fifth place ranking overall — a climb from relative obscurity almost unheard of in the NCAA.

There is more than one reason why Leach prefers to go over Maine's prospects with a fine tooth comb and in person.

"When you're spending $15,000 on a scholarship you really want to be sure of what you're getting — it's more than just a hockey player you're after," explained Leach.

Though there are just three former Vernon players with Maine Black Bears, they represent one-half of the club's total number of players from Western Canada. That's a statistic that Leach, Walsh and the Black Bears would like to remedy in the coming seasons.

"Western kids and eastern kids are different," he suggested. "The western kids are more laid back and more mature in their own way.

"We've got six players from Western Canada now and we're happy with them all. They've got a good attitude (about the game) and a realistic attitude about where they are and what they want in life. We'd like to see our team half and half."

Both Wensley and Major are among Black Bears' top scorers while Scott, who performed incredibly for Lakers in the second half of last season and during playoffs, earned a starting position in goal almost immediately. King was chosen by Detroit Red Wings in the 1986 June amateur player draft while Major was taken by Quebec Nordiques in the 1985 selection.

All three are proving their worth in the NCAA where the game closely resembles pro hockey, with the exception being the lack of fisticuffs.

"It's very physical hockey but it makes no sense to get involved in an actual fight because the punishment is too severe," explained Leach.

The accent on hockey skills and the absence of fighting makes college hockey a sensible alternative to a minor pro career and many junior age playrs are opting to finish their post secondary schooling on scholarship programs with the possibility of getting a shot at professional hockey when they are finished. With that goal in mind, Leach suggests players are well off to be in the BCJHL.

"For a kid who wants to go the college route, this is a tremendous league," he said.



JAY LEACH
. . . strong start

While Black Bears have made great advances in three seasons, Leach and Walsh know that the toughest battles are still ahead.

"To get an NCAA championship you have to have a very good and very mature hockey club and you also have to be very lucky," he concluded.

BCJHL

Coastal Division

	W	L	T	F	A	P
Richmond	16	5	0	140	82	32
Delta	13	9	0	126	103	26
Nanaimo	12	9	1	120	117	25
Abbotsford	11	10	0	107	118	22
Langley	10	8	1	96	111	21
Juan De Fuca	5	16	0	80	113	10

Interior Division

Kelowna	18	2	1	163	67	37
Penticton	15	5	3	123	90	33
Vernon	11	10	1	150	113	23
Summerland	1	20	1	78	187	3
Merritt	1	19	0	59	141	2