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sports

Editor – DON KENDALL

Palmer starts against Flyers

Vernon hockey fans get their first look at goaltender Jason Palmer tonight when Lakers host Delta Flyers, in B.C. Junior Hockey League action, at 8 p.m.

Lakers acquired Palmer last week, from Langley Eagles, in exchange for forward Wes Gentles. Palmer was named as third star in his first start with Lakers, last Sunday, in Rutland. Vernon lost 8-6, but the 18-year-old netminder made several spectacular saves.



JASON PALMER

"I'm excited about playing in Vernon," Palmer said. "I have my mind on hockey . . . all I want to do is play hockey."

Palmer has played with three BCJHL teams and had brief stints with two Western Hockey League clubs in the past two and one-half years. He finished the 1984-85 season with New Westminster Bruins, of the WHL.

He spend the 1985-86 season with Delta; attended Swift Current Broncos' training camp last September; had his BCJHL rights traded by Delta to Langley, in October; and was then dealt to Lakers.

"There were a lot of management problems in Delta early in the season and I asked them to trade me to Langley," Palmer said. "They agreed and I went there ready to play every game.

"But, Langley already had one goalie (Bob Bruni) and then they brought in a 20-year-old (Jamie Stewart). I couldn't see a 20-year-old sitting on the bench while an 18-year-old played most of the games, so I thought it would be better for me if I was traded. I talked to (Langley Coach) Muzz McPhersonabout trading me and he worked out the deal with Vernon."

After just one week of practices and one game, it is difficult for Palmer to analyze Vernon's strengths and weaknesses. However, he likes what he has seen. "There is an incredible amount of talent on this hockey team," he said. "I'm impressed with the team's systems and practices. The practices are very intense."

Likewise, Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare is impressed by Palmer. "It looks like we've found ourselves quite a goalie," Gare said. "If he plays anything like he did last Sunday in Rutland, he is going to win a lot of games for us."

Being traded for a three-year veteran, playing his first game in Vernon, and facing his former team-mates (Delta), puts a lot of pressure on Palmer tonight. "I'm looking forward to the game, but it will feel a little strange playing against the guys I played with last year," he said.

Lakers travel to Summerland, Saturday, to take on the Buckaroos. On Sunday night, Vernon hosts the lowly Bucks.

Palmer, like his new team-mates, know they must win three games this weekend if they are to have any chance of catching the top two Interior teams, Kelowna and Penticton Knights.

"We have the talent to take a good run at second place," Palmer said. "We just have to put it all together."