VERNON 9, WARRIORS 6

Lakers win sixth straight



LAKERS' Kevin Scott (19) cradles the puck before he made this attempt on Merritt goalie Randy Beekhuizen Tuesday night at Civic arena. Scott scored once and set up three others as Lakers skated to a hard-fought 9-6 victory over visiting Warriors. It was the sixth straight win for the Vernon club.

(Daily News Photo)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Vernon Lakers outscored visiting Merritt Warriors 4-1 in the third period to earn a tough 9-6 victory in B.C. Junior Hockey League action Tuesday night at Civic arena.

The win leaves Lakers eight points back of Penticton Knights in the battle for second place in the BCJHL Interior Division. Knights were 6-5 winners against Summerland Buckaroos Tuesday in Penticton.

The game was certainly closer than anyone would have expected, following a 10-5 victory by Lakers Saturday night in Merritt. It was also a lot closer than Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare wanted it to be.

"These guys (Lakers) are making me earn my money," suggested Gare. "We'll take the two points even though it wasn't very pretty."

Lakers' win streak is now extended to six games with their next matchup against Knights in Penticton Friday.

It took the local club until midway through the game to finally take the lead, having to overcome a 3-1 deficit to finish the first period with a 3-3 tie. After surging ahead 5-3, Lakers watched as Warriors tied the game 5-5 before the second period had ended.

Campbell Blair's 30-footer from the top of the circle put Lakers ahead once and for all early in the third frame however. It was the high-scoring rearguard's second goal of the night and his 27th of the season. He leads the division and the league with his individual scoring statistics.

Despite the relative closeness of the game, Lakers controlled the puck and outplayed the visitors badly. They outshot the Merritt club 52-35 but had trouble beating netminder Randy Beekhuizen.

"Their goaltending was very good," suggested Gare of Beekhuizen. "He (Beekhuizen) is a big kid and we were trying to go upstairs on him when we should have kept them lower."

Warriors chased starter Daryl Dickens from the net after two periods, stinging the shaky goalie for five goals before he left. Jason Palmer took over in the third period and the club's confidence was restored quickly.

Lakers demonstrated a much-improved puck-handling ability in front of the hometown fans Tuesday. The improvement is a major reason for the turn around in the club's fortunes in the past three weeks.

"We're head-manning the puck and moving it quicker," said Gare. "The guys are getting into the holes faster too."

Besides Blair's two goals, Vernon scorers included Doug Spooner, Stacy Hartnell, Jason Fox, Ed Tuckwood, Kevin Scott, Craig Bedard, and Al Young.

Young added four assists to go along with his goal and was named the game's outstanding player. Scott had three helpers to go with his single while Bedard also helped out on three goals besides his own.

Former Vernon player Frank Biller scored twice and set up two others for Warriors. Single goals came from Bill Birks, Bob Vermette, Paul Kruse, and Troy McLeod.

In other BCJHL action Tuesday night, Richmond Sockeyes defeated Langley Eagles 5-2.

In Penticton, the teams were tied 2-2 after one period but Summerland took a 5-2 lead after 40 minutes.

Brent Johnson, Ivan Moore, Jackson Penny, John DePourcq and Steve Chelios scored for Knights while Steve Fredrich and Mike Tremmell, with two each, and Vince Bajer replied for Bucks.

Paul Rutherford scored twice to pace Richmond who lead the Coastal Division of the BCJHL. Sockeyes also got goals from Jason Phillips, Dave Tomlinson and Bill Hardy. Bruce Kenward scored both goals for Langley which was outshot 45-26.

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Bird hot in ladies' loop

Maureen Bird (Big Momma's Pizza) strengthened her hold on first place in the Parkside Pontiac Eomen's Super Curling League with a 6-2 win over