Lakers stretch winning streak

Mark Greyeyes banged in a rebound, in overtime, to give Vernon Lakers a 6-5 win over Penticton Knights in B.C. Junior Hockey League action before 1,037 fans, Friday night, in Penticton.



MARK GREYEYES

The victory extended Vernon's winning streak to seven games and moved Lakers to within six points of the second place Knights. Vernon, which has three games-in-hand, can narrow the gap tonight when they take on the Buckaroos, in Summerland.

In overtime, Greyeyes won a faceoff in the Penticton end and got the puck back to Campbell Blair at the point. Knights' netminder Jamie Loewen blocked Blair's shot, but Greyeyes picked up the rebound and put a backhander into the net.

Vernon Head Coach Ernie Gare said his club is playing with poise. "Our guys are confident . . . and confidence makes a big difference," Gare said. "Even when we fell behind by a goal, late in the game, everyone on the bench felt we could come back and win it."

Lakers held period leads of 2-0 and 3-2. Centre Al Young scored at 7:52, of the third period, to increase Vernon's lead to 4-2. However, Knights came battling back with three goals, within four minutes, to take a 5-4 lead.

The go-ahead goal by Brad Heschuk, at 18:44, was hotly disputed by Lakers. "That play was a foot offside at our blue line," Gare said. "It happened right in front of our bench. I don't know how he (the linesman) missed that call."

But instead of getting mad, Lakers got even. Just 11 seconds after Heschuk scored, Kevin Scott dug the puck out of the corner and fed linemate Doug Spooner, who beat Loewen from the slot area.

Stacey Hartnell, with two goals, and Blair were the other Vernon marksmen. Blair's goal, his 28th of the season, moved him to within two of the team record for a defenceman, set by Mike Enemark, in 1983. The BCJHL record for goals by a defenceman is 36, set by Doug Lidster, while with Kamloops Braves, in 1979.

Kevin Caputo, Ivan Moore, Jackson Penney, Steve Chelios, and Heschuk replied for Knights.

Vernon netminder Jason Palmer kicked out 29 shots while Loewen made 24 saves at the other end.

Gare hopes his club won't be overconfident going into Summerland tonight. Buckaroos have managed only three victories, in 29 outings.

"We have to go one game at a time," Gare said. "We need a win tonight if we want to catch Penticton by Christmas."

Palmer, who has appeared in eight consecutive games since being acquired from Langley Eagles, will get a rest tonight. Randy Zelmak, called up from the Vernon Juvenile Reps, is scheduled to start in goal tonight.

Lakers' next home game is Tuesday night when they host the Knights.

In other BCJHL action Friday, first place Kelowna Packers thumped Summerland 12-7, Nanaimo Clippers doubled Abbotsford Falcons 8-4, and Langley Eagles hammered Delta Flyers 10-4.

In Kelowna, Kevin Taillefer and Jamie Kurki each scored three goals for the Packers, who led 6-1 and 9-4 by periods and got two-goal performances from Brent Mowery, Kelly Hurd and Pat Mangold.

Mark Valley had three goals for Summerland, Kevin Hoey got two and singles went to Darren McFarlane and Tony Bower.

The Packers had a commanding 62-17 edge in shots on goal.

Kelowna now has 24 wins, three losses and one tie while Summerland is 3-25-and-1.