Lakers host Knights tonight

Vernon Lakers, the hottest team in the B.C. Junior Hockey League, host Penticton Knights tonight, at 8 p.m., in the Civic Arena.

Lakers, who are riding an eight-game winning streak, have closed to within four points of the second place Knights. And Vernon has three games-in-hand.

Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare said his team's goal is to catch the Knights before Christmas. "About a month ago (Lakers trailed Knights by 12 points), we decided we wanted to catch Penticton by Christmas," Gare said. "To accomplish that, we have to win tonight."

After two weeks without injuries, Lakers have run into some problems. Left winger Stacey Hartnell underwent surgery, Monday, to repair his broken nose. Hartnell was clipped by an errant high stick during Vernon's 14-1 win over Summerland Buckaroos, last Saturday.

To fill Hartnell's spot, Gare will do some line juggling. Rugged Ian Alger will play alongside Kevin Scott and Doug Spooner. Alger's position, on the checking line with Mark Greyeyes and Todd Demchuk, will be filled by newcomer Mike Conrad.

Conrad joined the team Sunday after being left unprotected by Abbotsford Falcons. The 6'3'' forward-defenceman has missed most of the season due to mononucleosis.

"For a big guy, Conrad skates well," Gare said. "He is out of shape, but because of Hartnell's injury, we'll give him sone shifts tonight."

Two Vernon rearguards are also considered doubtful starters. All-star Greg Olson and Jason Fox are both sick and missed Monday's practice.

"We hope Greg and Jason can play, but we won't know for sure until just before game time," Gare said.

One thing Gare knows for sure is that Jason Palmer will be in goal tonight. Since Palmer joined Lakers last month, the team has an 8-1 record.

Penticton has also been hit by the injury bug. All-star defenceman Ken McArthur (leg), forward Tim Roux (shoulder), and Dowell Frantz (cracked cheekbone) will miss tonight's game. Defenceman Al Novakowsky (broken finger) and high-scoring forward Mike Barzal (shoulder) recently returned to the Knights' line-up.

Lakers play their final 1986 games Friday, at home, against Merritt Warriors, and Saturday night, in Kelowna, against the first place Packers.

Gooden claims cops hit first

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Dwight Gooden says Tampa police were "laying for me," while a lawyer for the New York Mets' pitcher says interviews he's conducted with witnessses indicate police may have used excessive force in restraining the baseball player during a fight with officers last weekend.

"The cops hit me first," Gooden was quoted as saying in today's editions of Newsday. "It was almost like a setup.

"They were laying for me...It happens a lot with me and the group I hang around with and the cops down here. They put the shackles on me for no reason at all and beat me.

"One guy pulled his gun and shoved the barrel right into my neck."

Lawyer Charles Ehrlich said Monday that "witnesses have come forward and provided bits of it.

"It appears there were excessive beatings involved."

BCJHL

Coastal Division

	W	L	T	F	A	P
Richmond	23	7	0	193	116	46
Delta	18	12	0	174	154	36
Langley	16	12	1	151	153	33
Nanaimo	15	14	1	167	165	31
Abbots'd	11	20	0	144	184	22
J. De Fuca	11	21	0	142	172	22

Interior Division

Kelowna	26	3	1	237	106	51
Penticton	20	11	3	175	150	43
Vernon	19	11	1	240	157	39

Summer'nd	3	27	1	115	287	7
Merritt	3	27	0	102	216	6