

VERNON LAKERS' rugged winger Todd Demchuk (18) digs the puck out of the corner during BCJHL action, Saturday night, in Vernon. Sandy Moger, left, scored once to help Lakers thump Abbotsford Falcons 9-2.

(Daily News Photo)

Blair sets record for career assists

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

Campbell Blair, of Vernon Lakers, has earned a spot in the B.C. Junior Hockey League record book.



CAMPBELL BLAIR

Blair collected five assists, Saturday night, to lead the Lakers to a 9-2 win over Abbotsford Falcons, at the Civic Arena.

The 20-year-old rearguard now has 158 career assists, three more than the old mark for career assists by a defenceman, seh by Ian Kidd, formerly of Penticton Knights.

"It was nice to break the record at home," Blair said. I had lots of chances in their end of the rink. . .I should have scored a couple goals too."

Five other league records are within Blair's grasp, including the career point total for defencemen, which he could break next week in back-to-back games with the lowly Summerland Buckaroos. Kidd has a career total of 235 points, nine more than Blair.

"Well, one record is down and I've got five more to go," Blair said.

Right winger Doug Spooner continued his torrid scoring pace with two goals and two assists against Falcons. Spooner scored four times, Friday, in Vernon's 13-4 win over Merritt Warriors.

Craig Bedard also collected four points for Lakers, including a pair of goals. Kevin Scott, with two goals, Jason Fox, Al Young, and Sandy Moger were the other Vernon marksmen.

Former Laker Jeff Kental and Shawn Snesar, with just five seconds remaining in the third period, countered for Abbotsford.

Vernon led 1-0 at the end of the first period and scored seven unanswered goals in the second.

Abbotsford goaltender Darcy D'Amour faced 49 shots while Vernon's Jason Palmer was tested only 24 times.

Lakers were without high-scoring winger Stacey Hartnell, who has requested a trade to Penticton Knights (see accompanying story), and rookie Bob Dever, who has mononucleosis. Dever may be sidelined for the remainder of the season.

Vernon also lost rugged winger Ed Tuckwood, who suffered a mild concussion in a second period collision.

Fox, who saw duty on the forward line and defence, has been one of the most-improved Lakers in recent games.

"Jason is really coming along," said Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis. "He is just a rookie and it took him a little time to adjust to junior. But, he has become a valuable player. We can use him anywhere because of his speed."

Lakers play in Summerland, Tuesday and Saturday before visiting Penticton, Jan. 16. Vernon doesn't have another home game until Jan. 17 when it entertains first place Kelowna Packers.

Packers have 58 points, seven more than Knights. Lakers occupy third place with 44 points, but have two games-in-hand on Penticton.

In the lone Sunday game, Captain John DePourcq collected six points to lead Knights to a 10-3 drubbing of Merritt Warriors.

On Saturday, Delta Flyers edged Juan de Fuca Whalers 7-6 in overtime, Richmond Sockeyes dumped Nanaimo Clippers 11-6, and Kelowna blasted Merritt 8-3.

Lakers lose veteran winger

Veteran winger Stacey Hartnell has quit Vernon Lakers.

Hartnell notified Lakers' management, Saturday, that he wants to play for Penticton Knights. Only hours after collecting five assists in Vernon's 13-4 win over Merritt, Hartnell left Vernon with his twin brother, Sean, and Steve Chelios, who both play for the Knights.

Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis was upset about losing the high-scoring left winger. "We're not happy about losing a quality player," Lis said. "If he wants to play in Penticton, they are going to have to make a deal. We hope to have the situation resolved by Wednesday or Thursday. If not, Stacey may spend the rest of the season in the stands."

Lakers have proposed two deals to the Knights, one reportedly involving two players and the other would send three players to Vernon.

Lis said, "We're not prepared to give away one of our leading scorers. And Penticton still owes us a player from a deal last season."

Hartnell ranks among the top 10 scorers in the Interior Division with 66 points, including 27 goals.

Lakers' Coach Ernie Gare and his players agree with the tough stand of their GM.

"We don't want to burn a (Player eligibility) card, but we will if we have to," Gare said. "Penticton wanted him and if they won't trade for him, he can rot in the stands."

Captain Doug Spooner feels his former teammate made a big mistake. "He (Hartnell) was close to getting a scholarship to Northern Michigan," Spooner said. "No college scouts are going to go to Penticton to watch him sit in the stands. If Penticton won't give us someone for him, I hope Mel buries him where even the Hockey News can't find him."

BCJHL President John Johnson confirmed Saturday night that Hartnell is not eligible to play for Penticton unless a trade can be completed.