PACKERS IN TOWN TUESDAY

Lakers clinch second place

Vernon Lakers have clinched second place and home-ice advantage in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Divison semi-finals.

Lakers trounced Merritt Warriors 7-3, Saturday, and hammered the hapless Summerland Buckaroos 15-2, Sunday afternoon. Vernon used the two worst teams in the BCJHL to extend its win streak to eight games, including six victories on the road.

Lakers now have 66 points, 11 more than third place Penticton Knights. Both teams have four games remaining. Vernon meets first place Kelowna Packers twice, including a confrontation Tuesday night, at the Civic Arena. The other two outings will be against Penticton, who will oppose Lakers in the division semi-finals.

Saturday's game was a typical Vernon-Merritt battle with a fight before the game, exchanges of fisticuffs throughout the night, and a line brawl at the end of the game.

Vernon netminder Jason Palmer and ex-Laker Frank Biller were ejected for fighting during the pre-game, warm-up. One of the casualties was Lakers' rugged winger Ed Tuckwood. Tuckwood, who won a clear decision in his bout, reinjured an infected knuckle and will be sidelined for a week.

Kevin Scott and Ian Alger scored two goals each for Lakers while Campbell Blair, Mark Greyeyes, and Shawn Howard added singles.

Bob Vermette, Richard Brew, and Paul Kruse replied for Merritt.

In Summerland, Vernon's big guns used the Bucks to fatten their scoring totals.

Scott and his linemates continued to set a torrid pace with 16 points. Scott scored four goals and added two assists while his wingers, Doug Spooner and Greyeyes, each tallied twice and picked up three assists.

Scott leads the BCJHL scoring race with 116 points, including 50 goals.

Shawn Howard scored three times for Lakers while Al Young added a pair. Singles went to Todd Demchuk and Craig Bedard, who ended a six-game scoring drought. Jan Zeidel picked up three assists.

Kevin Hoey scored both goals for Bucks.

For the third consecutive game, Mike Sutherland was between the pipes for Lakers. Sutherland, who joined the team last month after spending one and one-half seasons in the Western Hockey League, kicked out 21 shots.

At the other end, Guy Basaraba and Wade Parker combined to block 62 shots.

Vernon Coach Ernie Gare said he wanted Sutherland to get in a few games before the playoffs. "We wanted to see what Mike could do," he said. "And he has played well."

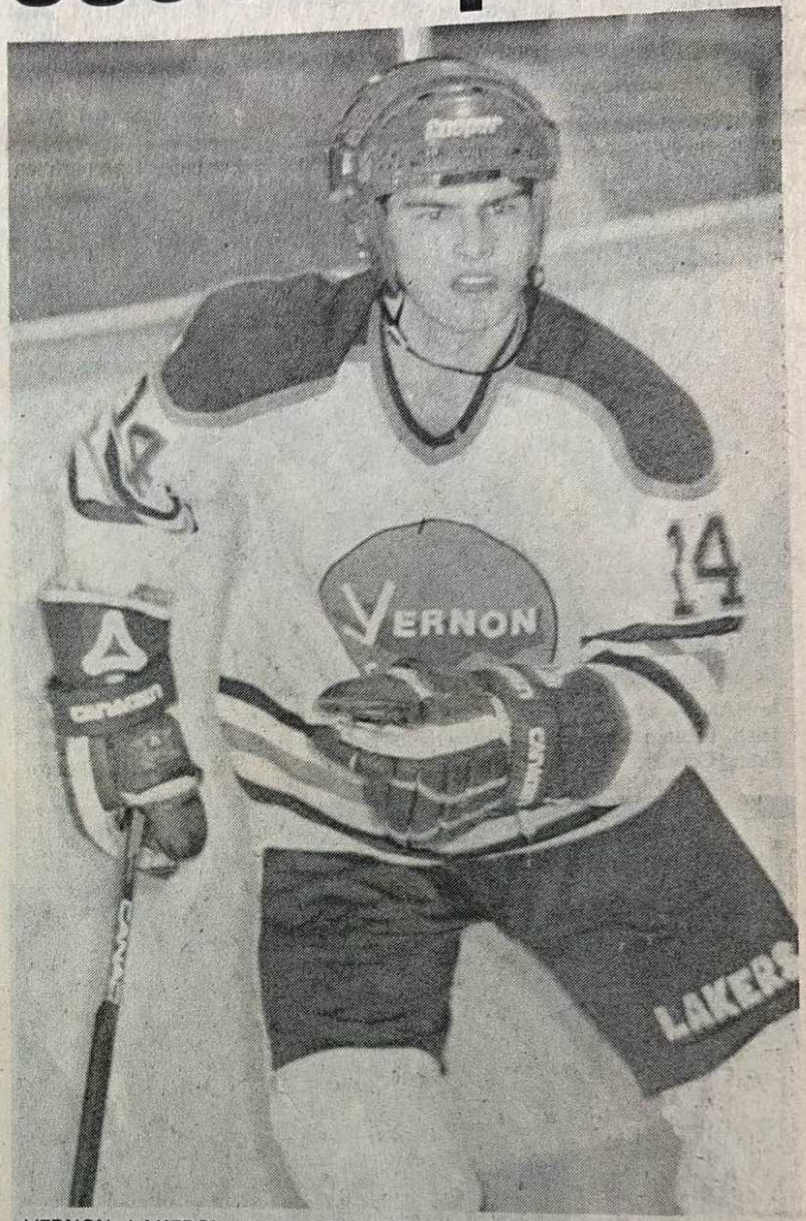
But, Gare made it clear he still considers Palmer his number one netminder. "Jason will be in goal against the Packers on Tuesday," he said.

Blair's 36th goal in Merritt tied the league record for goals in a season, by a defenceman. The mark was set by Doug Lidster, who played with Kamloops Braves, in 1978.

Blair now has 104 points, four less than the single season record, for defencemen, held by Ian Kidd, formerly of Penticton. The 20-year-old rearguard has already broken records for career assists and points by a defenceman.

In the only other BCJHL game Sunday, Richmond Sockeyes blasted Nanaimo Clippers 8-2.

On Saturday, Kevin Harder scored just 17 seconds into overtime to give Nanaimo a 4-3 win over Abbotsford Flacons. In other games Saturday, Penticton downed Summerland 4-1, Richmond beat Juan de Fuca Whalers 6-2, and Delta Flyers stopped Kelowna 4-1.



VERNON LAKERS' winger Mark Greyeyes picked up eight points, including five assists, during two weekend B.C. Junior Hockey League games.
(Don Weixl Photo)

Vernon junior girls