GAME THREE TONIGHT

Victory by Lakers means stranglehold

Vernon Lakers hope to place themselves within a single victory of a series championship when they host Penticton Knights in game three of their best-of-seven B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division semi-final tonight at Civic arena.



CAMPBELL BLAIR

A victory by the Vernon club would give them a three game lead in the all- important series with an opportunity to end the BC-JHL quarter-final in the minimum number of games. More importantly, Lakers are battling to end a playoff jinx that has plagued the club for the past five seasons when they have been eliminated from post-season play in the first round.

Lakers won game one at Civic arena on the strength of a 5-3 victory and earned a tremendous victory in game two at Penticton Memorial Arena with a 6-3 decision over Knights. In both games the local club utilized strong positional play and close, tight checking with the key on defensive play. As a result Lakers never allowed a goal in the third period of either contest.

Head Coach Ernie Gare expects more of the same type of play from his troops this evening and feels the club could earn a third victory if all goes well as it has in the previous two games.

"We're really looking forward to tonight — we want to put a stranglehold on them," he said. "Realistically, though, it's a big game for them (Knights) so we'll have to come up big if we want to win."

Naturally, due to the enormous success the club has experienced so far in the series, Gare doesn't want to jeopardize things by changing the lineup so he will put his lines together exactly as he's done for the past two games and basically they are the identical lines as the club has gone with for the past six weeks of regular season play as well.

"We're going with the same lineups as the first two games," he confirmed.

While Lakers first line consisting of centre Kevin Scott, right-winger and team captain Doug Spooner and left-winger Mark Greyeyes has been outstanding to date in the two games played so far, however, the club has received almost equally ambitions play from each of the other two lines. The second line, made up of Al Young at centre, Ed Tuckwood at right wing, and Craig Bedard at left side, has accounted for almost as many points as the first line and has been every bit as effective at both ends of the rink.

The third line, however, has really proven the club's depth at this stage of the season. Centre Shawn Howard has provided the club with solid strength up the centre and has thrown in more than his share of the scoring responsibility. Meanwhile his wingers, Todd Demchuk and Ian Alger, have played their positions as well as any two wingers in the league to date and have contributed offensively almost as much as their defensive play has been a factor.

Though their offensive play has been more than adequate to win each game it has been the club's defensive game that has proven to be a winner for them according to the Vernon coach.

"Our defensive play, right from the goaltender on out has been our key," suggested Gare. "We haven't allowed a single goal against in the third period.

"We're got enough talent offensively that we don't have to worry about where the goals come from so we just have to concentrate on defence," he added.

Goaltender Jason Palmer has been outstanding in the series so far and will get the nod from Gare to start tonight as well.

However, more than just hockey fundamentals have been at the heart of Lakers' success so far and Gare is quick to point this out as well.

"The enthusiasm has spread through everyone and that's important," he added. "I think we've got some momentum now so hopefully we'll get a good turnout."

League President John Johnson will be on hand to present Lakers' regular season scoring leader Kevin Scott with the BCJHL trophy for winning the individual scoring race. The club also has a small ceremony planned for rearguard Campbell Blair who placed second in team scoring with 110 points but broke four BCJHL records this season in the process.

Merritt Warriors travel to Kelowna for game three of the other Interior Division semi-final series. Kelowna leads that series 2-0 as well.

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

FEBRUARY 1982

More than 50 North Okanagan athletes, coaches, and managers were named to travel to Trail for the annual B.C. Winter Games. Another 12 competitors from this area were selected to the Okanagan Zone team as alternates.

Vernon Lakers were trounced 10-4 by the visiting Kelowna Buckaroos in B.C. Junior Hockey League Action. About 200 fans were on hand at the Civic arena for the game. The loss extended the Lakers' winless streak to 18 games.

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