GO LAKERS GO

Vernon Lakers head coach Ernie Gare promises a different story tonight when his team butts heads again with the Kelowna Packers, this time on home ice. The Lakers suffered a disillusioning, 9-5 loss to the Packers Friday night in Kelowna, but Gare attributes the loss to an opening bout of nerves that allowed the Orchard City team to take an early lead, and keep it despite several comeback attempts. Read Jim Judd's article on page 13 for a full account of the game. To return to their winning streak the coach says the Lakers will have to dictate the style of play and put more pressure on the Packers in the offensive zone. The big crowd expected for the Civic Arena tonight at 8 p.m. should add a measure of confidence to the team's effort in the second of its seven-game series with Kelowna.



PACKERS WIN SERIES OPENER 9-5

High-flying Lakers get grounded

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The high-flying Vernon Lakers fell back to earth with a terrific crash Friday night in Kelowna.

Lakers dug themselves into an early hole and never quite climbed out as they absorbed a 9-5 pasting from Kelowna Packers in the Orchard City.

Packers now lead the best-of-seven B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division Championship 1-0. Game two takes place tonight at Vernon Civic arena.

In suffering their first loss in five playoff games, Lakers looked nothing like the disciplined, hungry hockey club that ousted Penticton Knights in four straight games in their semi-final series.

Without the tactical supremacy of positional play by Lakers, Packers struck early and struck often, running up a 3-0 lead on goals by Pat Mangold, Kelly Hurd and then a short-handed effort by Jason Ruff all within the first 6:42 of the hockey game.

Goaltender Jason Palmer, who had been a standout in the Penticton series, looked very average and had a difficult time covering his angles and challenging his shooters. He made 26 saves during the game.

Craig Bedard managed to put Lakers on the scoreboard before the first period had ended however, notching his tally during a goalmouth scramble with one minute left.

Lakers looked like they were going to make a game of it as they scored the first goal of the second frame to pull to within a goal. Captain Doug Spooner, who had a two-goal night, was parked at the side of the Kelowna net and redirected Kevin Scott's centering pass in one motion. Scott was the one figure who could have made a significant difference in the game, scoring-wise, but missed three golden opportunities against open nets during the night. The BC-JHL scoring champion has scored just once in the first five playoff games.

One goal was as close as Lakers would come at any time during the night.

Kelly Hurd scored his second of the night to restore a two-goal lead for Packers. Hurd had four goals in the game in all.

Spooner made it a one-goal game once again taking a pass from Greyeyes this time but goals by Brent Mowery and Kerry Russell allowed Packers to escape the second stanza with a commanding 6-3 lead.

In the third period Lakers once again stormed out of the starting gate with Greyeyes and rearguard Campbell Blair each scoring once to make the score 6-5.

However, any thoughts of a comeback were quelched when Hurd notched his third goal just over a minute after Blair's marker. Jay Luknowsky and Hurd, with his fourth, completed the scoring late in the game to add insult to injury.

Hurd's line killed the Vernon club all night long, finding channels through Lakers' porous defence and devastating Palmer with quick wrist-shots.

"We took it to them (Lakers) early and that hurt them," explained Hurd. "We really wanted it."

Although they boasted of confidence coming into the series opener Friday night, Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare admitted that his club suffered from a case of nerves in the early going of game one.

"The first 10 minutes or so we were a little nervous," he said. "They got us in a hole and we never got out. We kept giving them that insurance goal and we could never quite catch up."

Lakers also allowed Packers the luxury of dictating the style of game early in the contest, something for which Kelowna Coach Bill Hogaboam was extremely grateful.

"We were able to stick to the game plan we wanted," he explained. "We wanted to play the man right from the drop of the first puck. We got that three-goal lead through our sustained pressure."

Hogaboam also admitted that the game got a little more wide-open than he would have liked and Gare concurred with this observation.

"When they get ahead like that you have to start gambling and we ended up getting caught a lot in the neutral zone," said Gare.

In heeding his own observations, Gare plans to adjust his troops accordingly for game two tonight.

"We want to put more pressure on them in the offensive zone and make sure our defence coesn't get caught in the neutral zone again," he explained.

"It was only one bad game," Gare continued. "They guys know it wasn't a great effort but it will be a different story tonight."

More than 2,000 fans crowded Kelowna Memorial arena Friday night and a similar crowd is expected at Civic arena tonight as the clubs face off once again at 8 p.m.



DOUG SPOONER scored twice in a losing cause for Vernon Lakers Friday night during the club's 9-5 loss to Kelowna Packers. Packers lead the Interior Division Championship 1-0 with game two tonight at Vernon Civic arena. (Don Weixl photo)

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DAILY NEWS SCOREBOARD

Junior Royals advance following win over Quesnel

PARKSIDE PONTIAC WOMEN'S CURLING LEAGUE
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Vernon Royal-Panthers defeated Maple Drive of Quesnel 50-33 after

Meanwhile, Vernon Royals senior girls team defeated Argyle of North

quarter was more than half finished. However, they quickly made up for lost