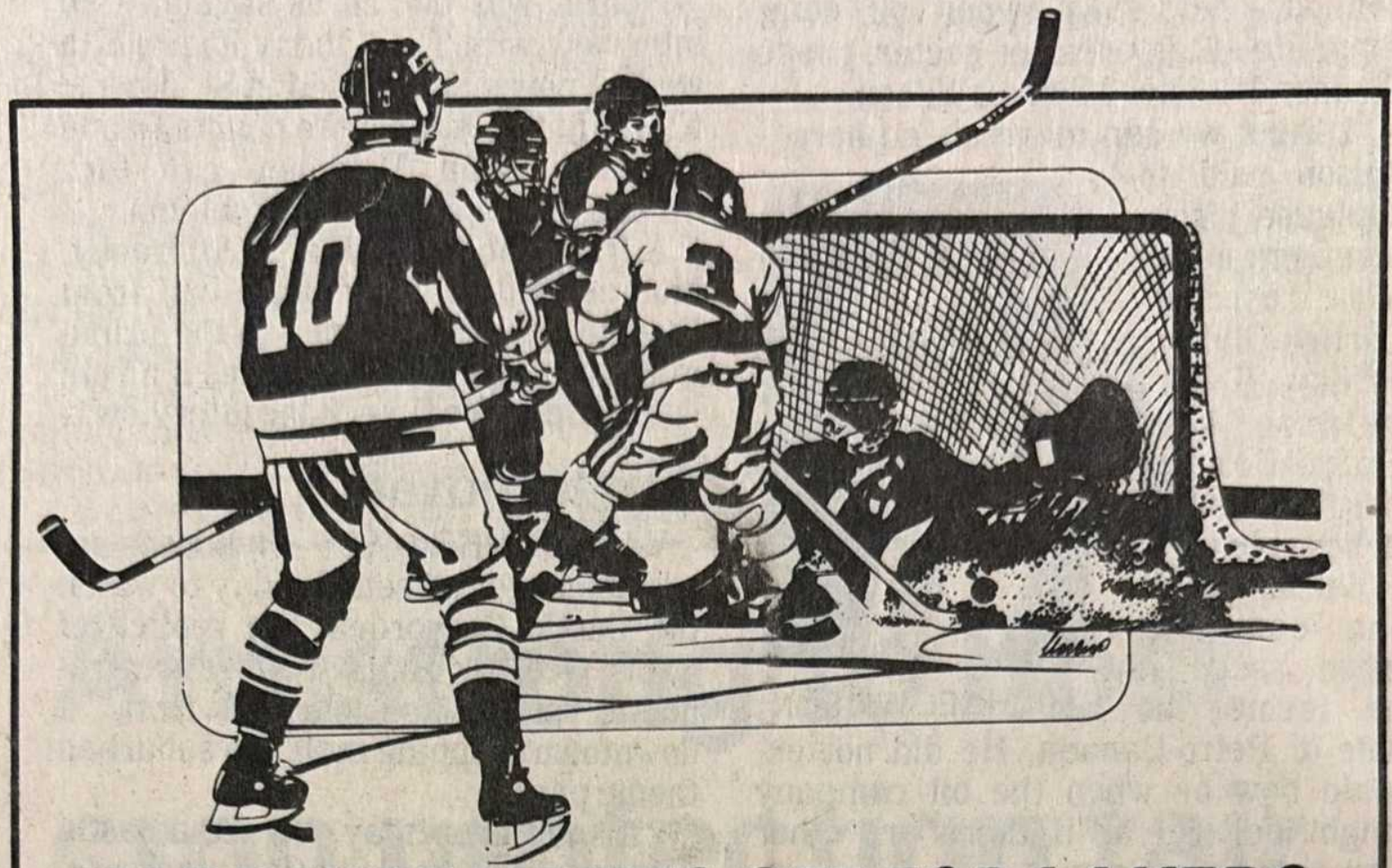


HARD WORK PAYS OFF FOR LAKERS

Daily News Sports Writer Jim Judd calls it "blue collar hockey". The Vernon Lakers have applied the Puritan work ethic to their game and the result has been an impressive showing against the Kelowna Packers to take a 2-1 lead in their best of seven BCJHL Interior division final. In Sunday's 5-2 win over the Packers, Lakers coach Ernie Gare had to look to the bench for some remarkable performances when, one by one, he watched his team leaders leave the game because of injuries and penalties. Kevin Scott, Doug Spooner, Al Young and Campbell Blair will all be back in the lineup for Tuesday's matchup at the Civic Arena as the Lakers try and make it 3-1. See Judd's analysis of Sunday's game on page 9 and keep watching the sports page as we follow the Lakers through the playoffs.

They're blue-collar hockey players



by
Jim Judd
Daily News
Sports Writer

I'll call it blue-collar hockey.

Vernon Lakers have once again transformed themselves into a winning team and they've done it through hard work, sweat and toil. Perspiration on the old brow and all that sort of stuff. Much like blue-collar workers everywhere in America, they're living by the old Puritan work-ethic — to wit: "work an honest day for an honest dollar."

They pack a lunch kit, fill up the old thermos and when the whistle blows for their shift to begin they put their backs into their job.

The blue-collar worker is what made America; forged a nation from wilderness and carried her through wars. They're the ones who do the labor, pay their dues, pay the taxes and who carry the country on their broad shoulders.

Such are the Vernon Lakers. A few finessful pucksters strewn amongst a solid group of hard workers.

In game three of the BCJHL Interior Division Championship series Sunday night in Kelowna, Lakers were without centre Al Young who has provided spark and hard work and scoring punch throughout the season and into the playoffs. They were also without hard-working Doug Spooner who wears the "C" on his jersey because he reflects the true spirit and honest hard-working ethic that is so important to a team. Scoring leader Kevin Scott has been fighting his stick and fighting off too many checks from Kelowna players to be effective in the series to date.

The missing personnel constitutes about two-thirds of the club's scoring during the regular season and the same three were carrying a good portion of the scoring in the playoffs. Any other team might have folded their tents and lived with the excuses they could have had.

But it was just another day on the job for the blue-collar boys. Roll up the sleeves and get to work.

Down 2-0 after one period in Kelowna's arena it might easily have been a blow-out for the home team. But Coach Ernie Gare readjusted the lines and all three did the job. When the smoke had cleared Packers limped off the ice on the losing end of a 5-2 score.

It was tough to put the finger on anyone as a key figure in the miraculous victory, aside from Shawn Howard, that is, but grizzled veteran winger Eddie Tuckwood springs to my mind.

Tuckwood could write a book on clutch-and-grab hockey. After four or five years of junior hockey he knows just about exactly what he can get away with and what he can't. They just don't come any tougher than Tuckwood and in Spooner's absence he became a spiritual-type leader.

Tuckwood doesn't pull any punches on the ice nor off the ice. He's a guy who says and does exactly what he feels. When Gare moved Howard to centre between Tuckwood and Craig Bedard things weren't exactly clicking until Eddie cleared the air.

"Howie hasn't been passing too much lately and we told him that if he started using us more we'd be more effective," said Tuckwood following Sunday's win.

Tuckwood is made of the kind of stuff that shift bosses or union bosses are made of. Whatever it is, it seemed to work wonders as Howard suddenly ate up the ice with a pair of goals and three assists on the night.

In the meantime, Lakers defensive squad also consists entirely of blue-collar boys. Perhaps Campbell Blair, with his gifted scoring and playing-making ability could be considered elitist, but in the long run he's turned in as hard a shift as any man on the job. The rest have toiled to the best of their ability and it's worked to perfection for the most part. In net Jason Palmer deserves a medal for his work-ethic.

Ditto the line of Ian Alger, Todd Demchuk and Jan Zeidel. Now here's a group of hard-hats if ever there was one. The three have checked every Kelowna line to a standstill in the past two games, much as they did to Penticton Knights a few weeks back. When the whistle blows at the end of the shift, these guys deserve a shower.

Almost fittingly, the club wears blue jerseys but underneath there is heart and soul and determination to succeed like no other Vernon hockey team before them. They have become a source of inspiration because they can truly make one believe that anything is possible but you have to go out and work for it.

If there was any other analogy that one could make about these guys it would be one of those Budweiser beer commercials dedicated to all the hard-working people in the country who deserve a brew when the day is done.

Well boys, this Bud's for you.

VERNON 5, KELOWNA 2

Lakers rediscover winning form

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Vernon Lakers did some soul-searching between the first and second period of their playoff game against Kelowna Packers Sunday night and rediscovered their winning formula.

Lakers scored three times in the second period and added two more goals in the third frame while shutting out Packers in the final 40 minutes to score an impressive 5-2 victory over the Orchard City squad.

Vernon now leads the best-of-seven B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division Championship series 2-1. Game four takes place Tuesday night at Civic arena beginning at 8 p.m.

Packers jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first period, capitalizing on a power-play opportunity and then pressuring Lakers in their own zone on the second goal. Terrance Head's quick blast from the top of the circle eluded Lakers' goaltender Jason Palmer while Brent Mowery scored Packers' first marker.

It was the last time Packers would have any sort of advantage in the game however, thanks to a lot of hard work on Lakers' behalf and the emergence of a shy and reluctant hero by the name of Shawn Howard.

With captain and team leader Doug Spooner sitting out Sunday's game with a shoulder injury, Al Young out with a knee injury, scoring leader Kevin Scott being checked into the ice by Packers, and rearguard Campbell Blair in the penalty box for half the game with a misconduct and a double minor penalty, Howard suddenly rose to the occasion with an outstanding performance.

The burly centre scored twice and set up the other three Vernon goals to provide scoring punch and much-needed leadership in the team's time of crisis. Meanwhile, the remaining members of the club put their noses to the grindstone, checking Packers to a standstill, and producing the most solid team-effort and most inspirational victory yet in the playoff season.

Mowery put the home club on the board just 2:12 into the game. The goal spoiled an almost unbelievable save by Palmer only seconds before when he got his stick on a shot by Kevin Taillefer aimed at a wide-open net. Head's goal came at 17:15 and Packers looked for all the world like they would run rampant over the injury-riddled Lakers.

But veteran forward Ed Tuckwood converted a sensational passing play by Howard at 3:57 of the second frame to give Lakers a renewed spark of hope. Tuckwood faked to the inside on the Kelowna defenceman in a one-on-one situation, and beat Dusty Imoo with a wrist-shot along the ice.

Line-mate Craig Bedard knotted the score at 12:25 taking a pass from Howard. Then Howard scored his first goal and the game-winner, at 18:39 on a Vernon power-play. Lakers outshot Kelowna for the first time in four periods at that point, hedging the hometown crew 19-13.

Nursing a one-goal lead with strong fore-checking and solid positional play, Lakers got their first insurance goal on another power-play opportunity at 13:57 of the third frame. Howard took a centering pass from Bedard from behind the net and undressed Imoo from the slot directly in front of the Kelowna goaltender.

Bedard notched his second of the game and put the icing on the cake at 15:37 banging in Howard's rebound as Lakers stormed Imoo on a three-on-one break.

Palmer made 40 saves on the night, many of them high scoring-percentage type. Imoo made 29 saves.

Howard, Bedard and Tuckwood proved to be a formidable offensive force against Packers considering the line was thrown together hastily after Young was injured in game one Friday night.

"We figured since Al and Spooner were out that we'd have to give it a little extra," suggested the soft-spoken Howard, whose appearance Sunday night left one with the impression of a grown many playing with kids. "They (Packers) started running around a bit and that helped us out because we got some skating room."

Gare was as surprised as anyone else at the outcome in consideration of the offensive holes in his lineup but praised his club for their work ethic in their time of need.

"Sometimes when you lose players like that everybody else starts to come across," he said. "He (Shawn Howard) started out slowly this season when he got here but he's getting more confidence every game and when he decides to turn it on there's no stopping him."

"They (Lakers) hustled the whole game," said Kelowna Coach Bill Hogaboam. "Usually they play well at the start and fade as the game wears on but it was totally the opposite tonight."

Saturday night, Lakers received an overtime miracle goal from defenceman Chad Biafore at 2:17 of sudden-death overtime to defeat Packers 4-3 at Civic arena before a crowd far beyond capacity. Biafore put a blistering knuckle-ball type slapshot from the blueline past the Kelowna goaltender.

Lakers jumped in front of Packers 3-0 in the first period on goals by Mark Greyeyes, Spooner, and rearguard Wes Elliott. Packers methodically erased the three-goal deficit with a single goal in the second frame by Greg Andrusak, then a pair of unanswered tallies in the third period by Mike Murinko and Kerry Russell.

Packers outshot Lakers 45-30 including a 13-5 margin in the third period. Palmer was in net for Lakers while Lucien Carrignan was between the pipes for Kelowna.

Meanwhile, in other BCJHL playoff action Sunday night, Delta Flyers finally eliminated Langley Eagles to win their best-of-seven Coastal Division semi-final series 4-3 with a 5-3 victory over Eagles.

Peter Homes scored three goals, including the winner while Ben Biagioni scored the other two for the winners. Jeff McLean scored twice for Langley while Rick Munro added a single.

Eagles now face Richmond Sockeyes in the championship series for the Coast title.



KELOWNA'S Kelly Hurd (27) breaks through the Vernon defence early in the first period Sunday night during game three of the best-of-seven Interior Division Championship series. Packers jumped in front of Lakers 2-0 in the first period Sunday but the Vernon squad rebounded to win 5-2 with hard work and determination. Game four of the series takes place Tuesday night at Civic arena. (Daily News photo)

Vernon Royal-Panthers win junior championship

Vernon Royal-Panthers captured the B.C. Junior Girls Basketball Championship in Abbotsford with a 47-31 victory over Westview of Maple Ridge in the final Saturday night.

Corinne Vanderwal scored 32 points to almost single-handedly defeat the Maple Ridge team and was chosen most valuable player for the game and the B.C. record for most points in a tournament with 107. The previous high mark was 89 points set last season.

In semi-final action, against Cranbrook, Vanderwal had a 24-point performance while Dibski contributed 15 points. Vanderwal was also most valuable player in that game.

"A" Championship following a 72-59 loss to St. Michael's University School Saturday night in consolation play.

Richard Bothe had 17 points and Ted Rush added 15 points both in a losing cause for Maroons, who were ranked seventh heading into the provincial playoff. Cariboo Hill, ranked number one, and also hosting the event, won