GAME SIX TONIGHT

It's do or die for Vernon club

The entire season goes on the line tonight at Vernon Civic arena. There's no tomorrow for Vernon Lakers if they don't defeat Kelowna Packers.

Lakers trail Kelowna 3-2 in their best-of-seven B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division Championship series. Game six takes place tonight at the local arena with game seven, if necessary, scheduled for Sunday night at Kelowna Memorial arena.

The Vernon club was in the driver's seat early in the series following back-to-back victories over Packers in games two and three which also included a splendid 5-2 win over the much-favored Packers at the Kelowna arena. However, Packers rebounded to win game four, in overtime, at Civic arena and followed up with a resounding 9-4 victory over the injury-laden Lakers Wednesday night in Kelowna.

Injuries have played a significant role in the latter games in the series although both clubs have been hit by them in the series. The Vernon squad is currently without the services of high-scoring veterans Al Young, Doug Spooner and Kevin Scott while they also lost the services of starting goaltender Jason Palmer.

Palmer was injured in warm-up prior to the start of game four last Wednesday when a slapshot hit him on the inside of his knee. The injury caused internal bleeding in the muscle with resulting soreness and stiffening of the limb for Palmer who has been ambulatory since then but needs the aid of a single crutch to help support his body weight.

However, in his absence, back-up goaltender Mike Sutherland has stepped in and done a remarkable job though he hasn't recorded a victory in the series yet.

Other members of the club are nursing less serious injuries than the four mentioned here.

Young and Scott out of the lineup means that the club is without their first and second string centre icemen which leaves the team at a tremendous disadvantage as far as carrying the puck out of their own end. In order to compensate for the inuuries, Head Coach Ernie Gare has had to shuffle forwards, and even defenceman to centre and up from the blueline to take the places of fallen teammates.

"You don't mind losing if you can lose with all your horses," explained Lakers' owner and General Manager Mel Lis. "It's unfortunate that we lost them at this time of the season."

Packers, too, are suffering from the injury bug though they haven't been devastated like Lakers have. Missing from the Kelowna lineup is winger Kevin Taillefer who is one-third of the high-scoring Kelowna first line which also includes Kerry Russell and Brent Mowery. Taillefer did dress for game four and managed to score the first goal but left the game soon after due to the injury. Taillefer suffered a severe cut to his elbow which required extensive stitching to close.

Lakers were consulting with team physicians this morning at press time but were still unable to confirm whether or not any of the injured players in question would be able to dress for tonight's encounter.

Following game four, Assistant Coach George Fargher suggested that every other member of the local club would have to put in a much-improved team effort if they were to expect to win this series.

Vernon Daily News | sports
Editor—DON KENDALL

JUDDS JOURNAL

Visiting media are overconfident



by Jim Judd
Daily News Sports Writer

We had a phone call Wednesday morning from the Managing Editor of a Kelowna newspaper who wanted to know if the Daily News would be interested in having their reporter file stories on Kelowna Packers from Richmond if their hockey club won the B C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division Championship. Of course all we had to do for our part was agree to split the cost of sending their reporter to Richmond.

Give me a break.

Luckily I wasn't able to contact the gentleman that day to offer my equally pugnacious reply but had I been able I would have politely declined but would have graciously offered to send him a postcard from Bill Vander Zalm's front yard.

A cocky attitude by the Kelowna media is certainly nothing new. I recall last week before the series began that every media source in the Orchard City was calling for a four-game sweep by the Packers against Lakers.

Naturally they had to change their tune somewhat after game two, but only slightly. While waiting in the media lounge at Memorial arena I had to endure a half dozen radio non-personalities quibling about whether Vernon would even come close to winning another game. Of course I didn't offer my own prognosis of the situation but off-handedly I mentioned that nobody had picked Lakers to win the semi-final series against Penticton Knights either. It failed to create a ripple of dessention, however.

Later that night, after Lakers had mopped the ice with their beloved Packers it was a different story once again. "Enjoy Richmond" they all bid to me as I hastened out of the press box and down to ice level for a few interviews.

In game four in Vernon their moods ranged from a cocky high after the first period (4-0 Packers) to a low similar to the one they experienced after game three when the second period had ended (5-4 Packers).

Unfortunately, the mood swings of the Kelowna media has been almost a true reflection of the swing in fortunes of the two teams on the ice. Rarely have I managed to sit through a series that shifted from one side of the field to the other so often and so quickly at times.

At present one might suggest Lakers are finished for the season since they meet Packers tonight in game six and are supposedly "reeling" from the beating they suffered Wednesday night in Kelowna. Stranger things have happened to date in this series so I wouldn't be too hasty in booking my bus trip to the New Westminster Greyhound Terminal if I belonged to the Kelowna media.

As one sporting personality so aptly put it once "the opera ain't over 'til the fat lady sings." Well, for the sake of argument, which we Vernon media types certainly do like to engage with when we're in the company of Kelowna media types, let's just say that the curtain hasn't gone down on the stage quite yet.

We have to assume that since Lakers were equal to the task of defeating Packers in their own building that they are more than equal to the task of defeating them at least one more time on their own ice surface.

From what I've observed through the first five games of this series there is only one major difference between these two hockey clubs and isn't anything to do with which team has more talent than the other on the ice.

The big difference has been penalties. Both clubs have extremely potent power-play units and each has carved the other to pieces on power-play situations.

Lakers have scored 10 times while at a man advantage, five of those in game four alone. One might point out that the local club lost that outing in spite of the five goals they scored on the power-play but when you consider that they spotted Packers a four-goal lead to start with, losing in overtime is closer to winning than some of the other games they've played in.

Another necessary ingredient is just the mental stamina and physical conditioning it takes to check Kelowna into the ice every shift of the game. Backchecking, forechecking, hemming them up in their own defensive zone and not allowing them to use the added advantage of their tremendous skating ability and passing plays is the key.

This also means using a heaping helping of physical contact — finishing off every check in both ends of the rink.

Perhaps Lakers are down three games to two in this best-of-seven series but there's one other way to look at it. The club is 6-3 in nine playoff games which means they have a .667 winning percentage. The way I see it that means they have at least a 67 per cent chance of winning tonight's game and even though I'm not much of a gambling man anymore, I'd have to admit that those are pretty good odds.

But more than anything else right now, I'd just like to get back to Kelowna Sunday night to watch a lot of people squirm in a press box.

So even though there's been very little love lost over the course of the season Vernon Lakers could do me and the rest of the media-type persons in this community a big favor.

Go out and kick some butt!