SERIES ENDS IN SIX GAMES

Packers eliminate Lakers



DOUG SPOONER, who missed much of the Interior Division Championship series against Kelowna Packers, came back Friday night to score once on a break away in the second period. However, Packers hung on for a 6-3 victory and eliminated Vernon Lakers in six games to win the BCJHL Interior Division Championship. Packers now face the winner of the Coastal Division for the BCJHL championship.

(Don Weixl photo)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Kelowna Packers opened the game with three quick goals — a familiar scoring pattern that had devastated Vernon Lakers in almost every previous game during the B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division Championship series. The result was the same as in the previous encounters as well.

Packers skated to a 6-3 victory over Lakers Friday night at Civic arena to win their best-of-seven division final 4-2. The Kelowna squad will now meet the winner of the Coastal Division matchup between Delta Flyers and Richmond Sockeyes. Sockeyes lead that series 3-0 following a 4-1 win Friday night and could wrap up the series tonight in Delta.

Kelowna opened the scoring at 3:15 of the first period on a soft goal by Jay Luknowsky, beating starting netminder Jason Palmer on the short-side of the net. Allan Schuler gave the visitors a 2-0 lead when his innocent-looking shot from the point beat Palmer who was partially screened. Then Jamie Kurki made it 3-0 when he capitalized on some sloppy work around the Vernon net by both defenceman and goaltender.

Lakers closed the first period with a goal but they never narrowed the gap to less than two goals at any time in the contest.

Palmer pulled himself in favor of backup Mike Sutherland following Packers' third goal and between them they faced 32 shots during the night. However, neither of them turned in the kind of performance that was necessary for Lakers to come out on top of game six and so prolong the series to a seventh and deciding game.

Lucien Carrigan, meanwhile, was outstanding in the Kelowna nets, facing a barrage of 53 shots from Vernon shooters but standing his ground and robbing them at every turn.

Packers added a pair of goals in the second frame, including Kevin Taillefer's short-handed goal at 12:57. Kelly Hurd had given Packers a 4-1 lead with his goal at 10:10 of the stanza.

Doug Spooner offered a faint glint of hope for Vernon when he closed the gap to 5-2 in the dying seconds of the second period. Spooner went in alone and faked to his backhand before pulling the puck to his forehand and beating Carrigan.

Lakers opened the third period scoring with a power-play goal at 6:38 — their second of the night and their 12th in the six-game series. However, a second goal by Taillefer put the icing on the cake for Packers.

Once again, Kelowna Coach Bill Hogaboam said he never felt safe at any time during the game even though his club enjoyed big leads at several points.

"We hung on," he said. "They (Lakers) showed a lot of character not letting down but the biggest difference was Carrigan.

"They kept coming at us and coming at us — even five-on-five they had us hemmed in and kept out-shooting us," he added.

"We outplayed them all game and Carrigan played a hell of a game," offered Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare. "They capitalized on their chances.

"We never threw in the towel once though," Gare continued. "I'm really proud of these guys — they showed a lot of character. I can't fault our guys for their effort."

Despite the intense rivalry that prevailed throughout the six-games of the series, tempers never took over from common sense and there was only one slight altercation in the entire series. Friday night, trailing by three goals late in the game, Lakers chose to stick to hockey and didn't give in to frustration — something which impressed the Kelowna management.

"They (Gare and Mel Lis) just did an amazing job with that club this year," suggested Kelowna General Manager Ron Swail. "They're just a real class act. I hate to see them be the ones to lose."

Gare was satisfied in a way, inspite of the series loss, suggesting that the club had accomplished at least part of its objective this season in the playoffs.

"Our first goal this year was just to get by the first round and with a few luckey bounces we could have pushed this series to seven games easily," said Gare. "We learned a lot this year and we'll have a good nucleus for next year."

Meanwhile, in Delta, Mike McCormick scored what turned out to be the winning goal at 18:21 of the second period as Richmond earned their 4-1 victory.

Sockeyes got goals from Brian Kozak, Jason Philips and Bryan Moller. Delta's lone goal came from Tim Kranjc.

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UBC 106, WINNIPEG 90

B.C. Junior

Richmond 4 Delta 1

(Richmond leads best-of-seven Coastal Divsion final 3-0)

Kelowna 6 Vernon 3

(Kelowna wins best-of-seven Interior Divsion final 4-2)