KENDALLS KORNER

Lis excited about next year



by
Don Kendall

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Sports Editor

Vernon Lakers may be gone, but not forgotten.

It has been almost two weeks since our local hockey heroes were eliminated by Kelowna Packers in the B.C. Junior Hockey League semi-finals. After defeating the Lakers, Kelowna was manhandled by the Richmond Sockeyes in the BC-JHL championship series.

Now that we know what the Packers have been doing in the past 10 days, let us fill you in on what has been happening with the Lakers.

First and foremost, Lakers' President and General Manager Mel Lis will remain in control of the team during the 1987-88 campaign. Lis, who purchased the club last summer, was pleased with his team's performance.

As everyone who knows Lis will tell you, he isn't afraid to let you know what is on his mind. He still feels the Lakers could, and should, have beat the Packers. "With a little luck and less injuries, we would have beat Kelowna," he said. "The injuries really hurt us. Our guys played with a lot of heart."

In his final prediction of the season, Lis said this week, "We would have put up a better fight, than Kelowna, against Richmond."

There was more good news this week. Ernie Gare, who served the dual role of head coach and assistant general manager, confirmed he will be back next winter. And Assistant Coach George Fargher is also expected to return.

"I haven't worked out all the details with George, but I'm sure he will be back," Gare said.

Lis expects 11-14 returnees in training camp next September. Despite the loss of most of his key personnel, the Laker boss is optimistic about 1987-88.

"I can't wait until next season," Lis said. "We have a good nucleus to build from and we have recruited some excellent prospects. We already have commitments from four or five players who can help us next year."

In keeping a promise, Lis and Gare have done their best to secure college scholarships for their players. Among the Lakers who will go on to university next fall are Kevin Scott, Northern Michigan; Campbell Blair, Maine; Shawn Howard, Minnesota-Duluth; and Craig Bedard, University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

Vernon's most valuable player, Doug Spooner, is also negotiating with an American school. "I'd like to see Doug get a scholarship, but if he doesn't, we'd love to have him back," Gare said. "He would be the best forward in the BCJHL next season."

Two other players who won't be returning are overage forwards Al Young and Ed Tuckwood. Both hope to play semi-pro hockey in Europe.

"I'm trying to line-up a deal for Al and Ed right now," Gare said. "I think they have a pretty good chance of getting on with a second or third division team."

Mark Greyeyes heads the list of returning players. The slick forward should be a contender for the BCJHL scoring title next season. Other returning forwards include Todd Demchuk, Jan Zeidel, and Ian Alger. Greg Olson and Jason Fox, who played defence last season, will be moved up front.

Chad Biafore, Wes Elliott, and Keith Chase will anchor the defensive corps. Bob Dever and Mike Conrad, who saw limited duty during 1986-87, are also expected to be in camp.

Goalies Jason Palmer and Mike Sutherland have both indicated they will try out with Western Hockey League teams, but Lis expects at least one of them to return to Vernon.

"We aren't going to be caught short in goal like we were last year," Lis said. "I hope Palmer and Sutherland return, but I'm not counting on it. We'll have lots of goalies at camp."

For Lis thereis no off-season. Gare and him returned from a Kootenay scouting trip last Monday. Their next stop is an under-17 camp in Summerland.

Lis loves hockey . . . and is determined to put a winning team on the ice. It is that dedication that earned him the respect of his players and coaches during the past year. And it is his hard work that ensures we will be treated to another entertaining season of junior hockey next winter.