TOP PROSPECTS GO TO ROCKIES

Lakers sign affiliation

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

Vernon Lakers of the B.C. Junior Hockey League have entered into an affiliation agreement with the Columbia Valley Rockies of the Kootenay International Junior 'B' League.

Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis announced Wednesday that the clubs will work together to develop young hockey players.

"Players who need another year of fine tuning to get ready for junior 'A' will go to the Rockies," Lis said. "It is our feeling that a young player will improve more by playing junior 'B' hockey than spending a second season in midget or juvenile."

The Vernon GM emphasized the Invermere-based team won't become a dumping ground for players who don't have a future in hockey.

"Our hope is that every player we send to the Rockies will play for the Lakers some day," Lis said. "They will receive good coaching and gain valuable experience with Columbia Valley."

Rockies' Head Coach Tom Renney is assessing his prospects first-hand at the Lakers' rookie camp this week. Renney was also head coach of Team B.C. at the Canada Winter Games and is an assistant coach with the B.C. Under-17 Team that will compete in the Quebec Cup, at Christmas, in Montreal.

"We're excited about the agreement because Vernon has an excellent organization and reputation," Renney said. "I'd like to see six-to-eight players from Vernon's camp come to our club. They have some great prospects who will benefit from spending a season with us."

Rockies placed third, just four points out of first place, in the five-team Eastern Division of the KIJHL during the 1986-87 season.

Right winger Doug Barrault and defenceman Barry Lightfoot, who played for the Rockies last season, are attending Vernon's training camp.

Meanwhile, Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare will trim his rookie camp roster to 40 players for Friday night's intra-squad game, at the Priest Valley Arena. Following the game, about a dozen rookies will be invited to the club's main camp, which starts Tuesday.



VERNON LAKERS' Head Coach Ernie Gare discusses the talent at his rookie camp with Tom Renney, head coach of the Columbia Valley Rockies. Lakers have entered into a working agreement with the junior 'B' club. (Daily News Photo)

The intra-squad game gets under way at 6 p.m.