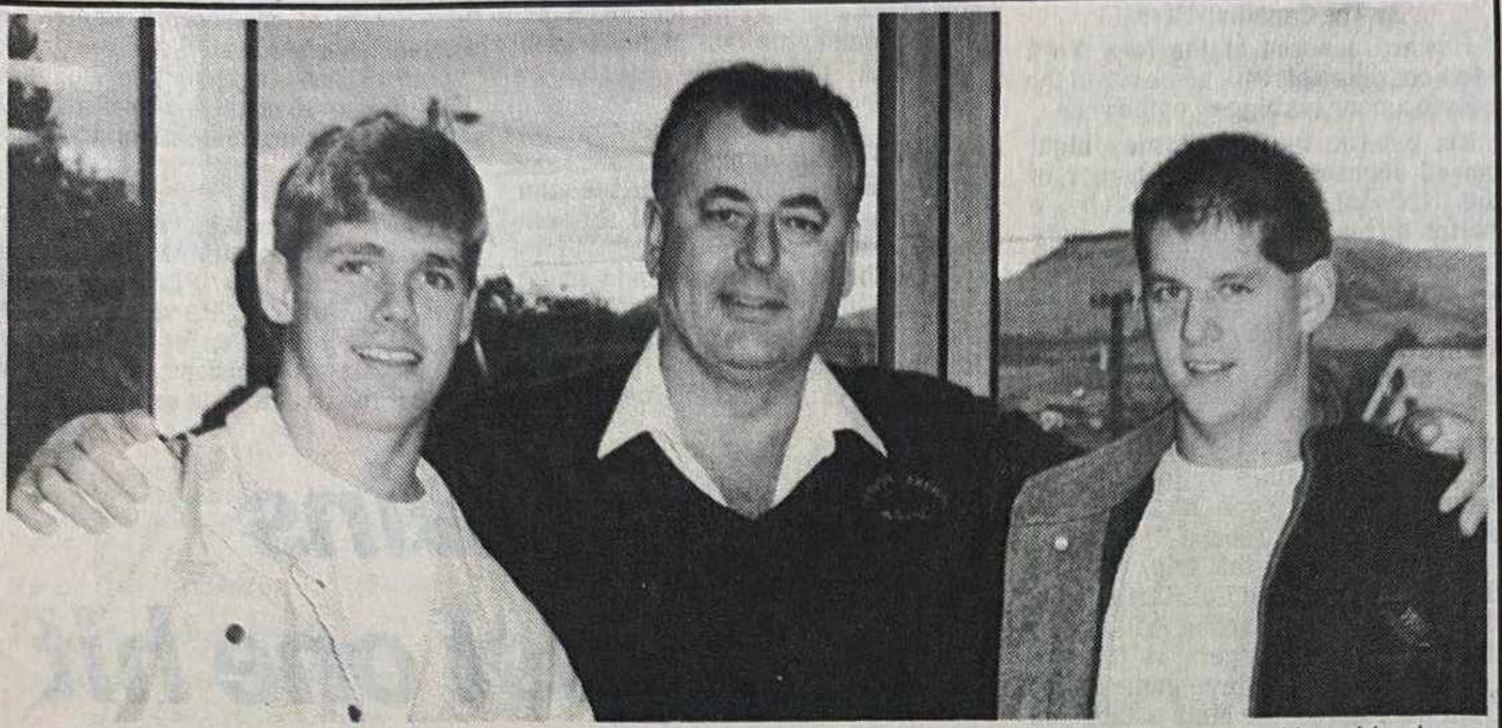


VERNON LAKERS' General Manager Mel Lis welcomes forwards Dane Jackson, left, and Mike Barkley to training camp. Jackson and Barkley spent the last two weeks touring Czechoslovakia with the Pacific Region Under-18 Hockey Team.

(Daily News Photo)

Summer recruiting pays off for Lakers

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

A shrewd trade and an aggressive off-season recruiting program have paid off for Vernon Lakers.

Less than 48 hours after leaving Czechoslovakia with the Pacific Region Under-18 Team, forwards Mike Barkley and Dane Jackson checked into the Lakers' training camp, at the Priest Valley Arena.

Barkley and Jackson were among the most sought-after young hockey players in the province this year.

"We feel very fortunate to have Barkley and Jackson at camp," said Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis. "They are both excellent hockey players."

Barkley was acquired in an eight-player trade with Juan de Fuca Whalers. The slick winger collected 55 points, including 30 goals, in his rookie season with the Whalers. But, he was considered expendable by Juan de Fuca because he was expected to sign with New Westminster Bruins of the Western Hockey League.

"If the Whalers hadn't traded me, I probably would have ended up with New Westminster," Barkley said. "The Bruins made me an excellent offer."

But, the possibility of getting a U.S. college scholarship helped draw Barkley to Vernon.

"The organization and opportunity to get a scholarship made me decide to join the Lakers," Barkley said. "Mel (Lis) has been just great. Since I met him, he has taken care of everything. All I have to do is go out there to play the games."

The Pacific Region Team lost six consecutive games in Czechoslovakia, including three to that country's Under-18 National Team. But, Barkley said the trip was a great experience.

"We really enjoyed ourselves," he said. "And we should have won a couple games. We completely outplayed the Czechs in one game, but lost 4-2."

Jackson agreed that the trip overseas was a tremendous experience. "We played some good hockey against their national team," Jackson said. "We lost a couple close games."

Jackson starred with Castlegar Rebels, of the Kootenay International Junior 'B' Hockey League, during the 1986-87 season. After collecting 96 points, including 46 goals, with the Rebels, the big forward was chased by numerous junior 'A' teams.

Kelowna Packers, Penticton Knights, and Richmond Sockeyes of the BCJHL; Humboldt Broncos, of the Saskatchewan Junior 'A' League; and Seattle Thunderbirds, who own his Western Hockey League rights; were among the clubs who sought Jackson's services.

"Seattle really wanted me, but I decided to go the tier two route and try for a scholarship," he said. "Vernon showed a lot of interest in me, they have a good organization, and I know Ernie (Gare) is a good coach."

Jackson, who weighs 185 pounds, plays right wing or centre. Barkley, who tips the scales at 175 pounds, is at home on either wing.

Gare expects both players to help his club. "They are among the most talented 17-year-olds in the province," he said. "Not only are they skilled, they also have good attitudes."

A total of 47 players, including seven goalies, were on the ice Wednesday night. Gare will reduce his training camp roster by about 10 players after tonight's intra-squad game, at 6:45 p.m. The Lakers travel to Penticton, to meet the Knights, in a BCJHL pre-season game, Friday. On Saturday, Vernon tackles the Merritt Centennials, in Winfield.