Palmer shopping for a new team

Goalie Jason Palmer, who starred for Vernon Lakers during the 1986-87 season, appears to be headed for Saskatchewan.

Palmer, 19, walked out of the Seattle Thunderbirds' training camp last weekend. According to Jake Gourtzen, general manager of the Western Hockey League club, Palmer had an excellent chance of earning a spot with the T-Birds.



JASON PALMER

"Jason left Seattle a few days ago and told us he had a few personal details to work out," Gourtzen said. "We haven't heard from his since."

The departure of Palmer has left Seattle with only two netminders on its roster. "We expected Jason to play for us this year," Gourtzon said.

Since leaving Seattle, Palmer has contacted Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis about the possibility of returning to Vernon. But, that possibility seems remote, according to Lis.

"Jason is interested in playing in Vernon, but he wants to be paid," Lis said. "We're not a pro team. He told me he can earn $1,000 per month in Saskatchewan so I told him to have a good trip. It wouldn't be fair to the other players on our club if we started paying one or two guys that kind of money."

Palmer started his colorful, and at times controversial, junior career with New Westminster Bruins, of the WHL. He played in the BCJHL Coast Division with Delta Flyers and Langley Eagles before the Lakers acquired him last December in a trade that sent forward Wes Gentles to Langley.

Lakers still hold Palmer's tier two rights and would be entitled to compensation if he joins any other team. "If Jason winds up with a team in Saskatchewan, we are prepared to work out some type of deal for his (player) card," Lis said.

KENDALLS KORNER

Lakers loaded with talent



by Don Kendall

Daily News Sports Editor

This could be the year for the Vernon Lakers.

It has been more than a decade since a junior hockey team created as much excitement in the North Okanagan as this year's version of the Lakers.

In 1974, the late-Joe Tennant brought his colorful style to Vernon. As an affiliate of the powerful Medicine Hat Tigers, Tennant was able to attract some of the top young prospects in Western Canada.

Tennant's club broke BCJHL records for scoring, points, and victories. But, in the playoffs they ran into a hot goalie, named Pat Murphy, and lost to Penticton.

In the past four years, Vernon has been a contender for the Interior Division title. Lakers had stars like Bob and Dave Wensley, Stacey Wakabayashi, Doug Spooner, and Kevin Scott. But, they lacked the depth of Kelowna or Penticton. That appears to have changed.

Vernon's training camp roster has been reduced to 30 and at least 25 of those players are capable of playing in the BCJHL. From now on, every cut will be tough for Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare and Assistant Coach George Fargher.

The defence is anchored by returnees Wes Elliott, Keith Chase, Chad Biafore, and Bob Dever, along with Paul Soukoroff, who was obtained in a trade with Juan de Fuca Whalers. The depth on the blue line has enabled Gare to move all-star Greg Olson to the forward line.

Up front, veterans Mark Greyeyes, Ian Alger, and Olson are joined by Mike Barkley and Dane Jackson, who played for the Pacific Region Under-18 Team; Jamie Steer, who was the top scoring midget player in Calgary last season; Dallas Drake, who won the Kootenay International Junior 'B' League scoring title; Vernon's Duane Dennis, named most valuable player in the Molson Pro-Am League; highly-rated Greg Parnell, from Prince George; Jason Harder, who has two seasons of BCJHL experience with Kelowna and Nanaimo; Mike Paller, who Lakers obtained from Abbotsford; and at least five other top prospects.

Goaltending was a question mark until this week. Barry Rysz, who starred with Dawson Creek of the Peace Cariboo Junior League last season, blanked Kelowna during his 20-minute stint Wednesday night. And Lakers' General manager Mel Lis sent sophmore defenceman Jason Fox to Penticton in exchange for goalie Mark Tyszka. Tyszka posted the second lowest goals against average (3.20) in the BCJHL last winter.

It is too early to predict a provincial, or even division, title for the Lakers. We have been fooled before. But, the pieces appear to be falling into place. And we should be treated to a great winter of junior hockey.

SPORTS WEEKEND

The deadline for participation in the Daily News Sports Weekend trip is next Tuesday (Sept. 15).

The Sports Weekend, scheduled Oct. 9-11, includes an Australian Rules Football Game at B.C. Place Stadium, a National Hockey League game with Vancouver Canucks hosting New York Islanders, and a Canadian Football League game with B.C. Lions tackling Calgary Stampeders.

Total cost is $271 per person. The package includes return airfare to Vancouver, two nights accommodation, tickets to all three games, airport transfers in Vancouver, and a social gathering.

For further information, or to book a seat, phone yours truly at 545-0671, between 7 a.m. and 12 noon.