Palmer practicing in Vernon

One junior hockey player arrived in Vernon, attempting to salvage his career, and another prospect left Vernon, to ponder his future, during the past 48 hours.

Veteran goaltender Jason Palmer practiced with the Vernon Lakers, Monday, after playing three weekend exhibition games with Portland Winter Hawks, of the Western Hockey League.

Palmer starred with the Lakers during the 1986-87 campaign and was expected to play with Seattle Thunderbirds, of the WHL, this winter. However, he walked out of the Thunderbirds' training camp two weeks ago and after 10 days of inactivity, was given permission to play the exhibition games with the Winter Hawks.

"But, he can't practice or play anymore with Portland until they work out a deal with Seattle," said Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare. "So, he asked if he can workout with us for a few days."

Gare said there is little chance Palmer will remain in Vernon for the winter. "Jason wants to play in the WHL and we are satisfied with the goaltenders on our roster," he said.

Meanwhile, Jamie Graham, who was cut by Portland after last Saturday's game with the Lakers, has returned home to Edmonton. The Winter Hawks left Graham in Vernon and expected the 17-year-old winger to play with the Lakers.

Gare said he hopes Graham will return to Vernon. "I think he just needed a couple days to think about his future," Gare said. "He was disappointed that he didn't make it in Portland."

Lakers are idle until the weekend when they play three times in 48 hours. Vernon hosts Penticton Knights and Kelowna Packers on Friday and Saturday nights, respectively, before travelling to Merritt, on Sunday.

KENDALLS KORNER

Mick is a leader in Portland



by Don Kendall

Daily News Sports Editor

North Okanagan hockey fans were treated to a night of fast-paced, wide-open junior hockey last Saturday ... courtesy of the Vernon Lakers and Portland Winter Hawks.

The Lakers and Winter Hawks tied 8-8, but the score wasn't important. The two clubs threw caution to the wind and went to the attack at every opportunity. And the fans loved it.

Two of the star performers were JAMIE STEER of the Lakers and TROY MICK of the Winter Hawks.

Steer is going to provide plenty of excitement for the Vernon faithful this winter. The Calgary native picked up five points, including two goals. His shot and puckhandling are impressive, but it is his speed that set him apart from everyone else on the ice.

Mick, a Vernon minor hockey graduate, showed why he is expected to be one of Portland's offensive leaders this season. He collected five points, including three goals, and missed a glorious opportunity to score his fourth goal with less than two minutes remaining in the third period.

Mick praised the Lakers and said under the circumstances, Winter Hawks were satisfied with the tie in Vernon.

"This isn't the team we'll be playing with this winter," Mick said. "We only had six veterans on the trip and DENNIS (HOLLAND) didn't play."

Holland, who is Mick's long-time friend and linemate, is bothered by an ankle injury which is expected to keep him sidelined for about a week.

"We should get four guys back from NHL training camps this week and I wouldn't be surprised if we made a couple trades to get a couple more experienced players," Mick said.

Brothers TROY and TREVOR POHL (St. Louis Blues), JAMIE NICHOLLS (Edmonton Oilers), and SHAWN CLOUSTON (New York Rangers) are expected to rejoin the Winter Hawks after NHL camps.

Mick said, "We have a lot of holes to fill. A lot of our key guys won't be returning."

DAN WOODLEY (Vancouver Canucks), DAVE ARCHIBALD (Minnesota North Stars), GLEN WESLEY (Boston Bruins), JEFF SHARPLES (Detroit Red Wings), RYAN STEWART (Winnipeg Jets), and BRENT FEDYK (Detroit Red Wings) are all former first round amateur draft picks who are expected to play in the NHL, or with American Hockey League affiliates this winter.

Vernon native JEFF FINLEY, who was selected in the third round of the 1985 draft by the New York Islanders, will also play in the pro ranks this season.

Wesley, Sharples, and Finley gave Portland the most mobile defence in the Western Hockey League last season. With that trio gone, another Vernon minor hockey product, Jay Stark, will be one of the leaders on the blue line.

"It will take a few weeks to get everything together, but we should be fairly strong," Mick said.

Strong is a word that can now be used to describe Mick. After a summer training program, he now tips the scales at 180 pounds and is looking forward to the biggest season of his career.

He was bypassed in the first three rounds of the NHL draft last June, but hopes to rectify that situation next spring.

"I'm only eligible for the first three rounds again because of my age," Mick said. "So, I'll have to have a good year."

Portland's player personnel director, WAYNE MEIER, doesn't expect the NHL teams to let Mick slip through another draft. "I think he should go high in the second round ... but it depends on how he plays this year," Meier said.

Mick, who scored 30 goals during the 1986-87 campaign, has set two personal goals for himself. "I'd like to score 50 goals ... and stay healthy."

Playing alongside Holland, and probably Trevor Pohl, Mick should score at least 50 goals ... and catch the attention of a lot of NHL scouts.