Vernon Daily News

sports

Editor—DON KENDALL

Lakers acquire top-rated goalie

Vernon Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis feels he has made a positive move to stabilize the club's goaltender woes with the recent acquisition of 20-year-old Glenn Fry.

Fry, who spent two years with Prince George Spruce Kings of the Peace Cariboo Junior Hockey League where he was an all-star, was dealt to Lakers, by Richmond Sockeyes, in return for goaltender Jason Palmer.

Palmer has already seen netminding duty with the defending Centennial Cup champions, making 37 saves Tuesday night in a 6-4 loss to Delta Flyers.

Fry, meanwhile, will very likely make his debut in a Vernon uniform Friday night when Lakers play host to Summerland Buckaroos who picked up their only win of the season at the expense of the Vernon club several weeks ago.

"For sure he (Fry) will be our starter," explained Lis who is currently negotiating another deal which involves goaltender Jakki Turunan. "He has to play a lot to be effective so we'll put him in every game until he needs a rest and then we'll put in our back-up goalie."

As recently as Monday, Lakers were still carrying four goaltenders but since then Palmer has been dealt, Turunan is in the process of being dealt away, and the fate of either Mark Tyszka or Barry Rysz hangs in the balance.

"We want to get down to two goalies right away," announced Lis on the topic.

Local hockey fans had an opportunity to see Fry in action recently when Sockeyes played at Civic arena. After falling behind 5-0 in the first period Sockeyes used Fry for the last two periods and he held the local club to three more goals. Since then Lis has seen the 20-year old goaltender in several other situations.

"If the three games we saw him play are any indication then he'll be just great," suggested Lis.

Fry first came to the attention of Lakers when Prince George played an exhibition match in Vernon last season. In spite of being outshot by a 2-1 margin, Fry kept the visitors in the game and the score close. Following that encounter, Fry and Lis began communicating.

"He (Fry) phoned me last year and wanted to come here (Vernon) but there was nothing I could do about it at the time."

Fry arrived in Vernon Tuesday evening and began practice sessions with Lakers first thing. If size were any qualifying criteria, the newcomer fills that bill as well according to Lis.

"He's big and strong," he said.

League not worth it anyway



by
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Almost without notice this week, the fledgling Pacific Northwest Hockey League came close to folding its tents without ever playing a league game. We shouldn't expect anyone, least of all hockey fans in the Lower Mainland area, to mourn the loss should the inevitable happen.

Billed as a semi-professional league that would utilize players between the ages of 21 and 28, the idea never cut any weight with the paying public we can assume. Rather than risk the loss of any additional money, owners of the four franchises have decided to adopt a holding pattern while it's decided if the league will operate at all.

To give you an idea of how well the idea took hold, nobody in this building could name the locations of the four teams. It took more than just a little research to find that the teams included: Delta Hawks; Chilliwack Chiefs; Bellingham Bulls; Cowichan Buccaneers.

It could be argued that the Pacific Coast region of North America already has enough hockey entertainment to suit sports fans and the fact that the PCHL may die in the birth is further proof of the inclination.

In the Lower Mainland region there is currently situated one National Hockey League franchise, Western Hockey League franchises in Victoria and New Westminster, a Canadian Inter Athletic Union (CIAU) team at University of British Columbia, and six B.C. Junior Hockey League locations scattered throughout the area as well.

Toss in a number of Junior "B" teams throughout the region and you quickly get the message about the number of teams competing for hockey dollars in a concentrated area.

South of the Lower Mainland there are WHL (major junior) franchises operating in Seattle and Spokane, Wash., and a very successful team operating out of Portland, Ore. One might add here, that the Portland operation is highly successful for a number of reasons but not the least of these is the fact that there is no other form of hockey entertainment for a considerable radius of the U.S. city.

The owners of the would-be PNHL hockey centres put forth the pale argument that there were a good number of players too old for major junior hockey and not quite good enough to play pro. Therefore it seemed logical to make a new league for these young men.

Obviously very few other people, particularly hockey fans in the area, saw things in the same light of day. Besides, as it turns out, there aren't as many of these young players as one might think. At least not enough quality players capable of playing at the semi-pro level.

Look at it this way; there are 21 NHL franchises currently operating. With any luck nobody will get the bright idea to add any more in the near future. Between these 21 teams more than 400 players are accounted for.

There are two semi-pro leagues still in operation in the American and International Hockey Leagues. Chalk up another 400 or more players to fill these rosters.

Take into consideration that there are 40 more teams operating in the National Collegiate Athletic Association in the United States as well as an almost equal number of CIAU teams operating in this country. They are all stocked virtually from the same sources, one might add.

In addition there are literally hundreds of college teams operating in both countries.

Take into consideration also, that a number of young North Americans make a career out of playing the game in various European leagues also.

What it all adds up to is that anybody in the post-junior age category that should be still playing the game, is probably still in the game at some level or other. Whatever is left over isn't enough to bother with and certainly isn't enough to form an entire hockey league around.

And it certainly isn't worth wasting either good entertainment dollars or owners' money upon.