LAKERS DUMP BUCKAROOS

Interior race tightens

Vernon Lakers stayed in the midst of the battle for first place in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division with a 7-3 win over the lowly Summerland Buckaroos, Friday night, at the Vernon Civic Arena.

In other games, Penticton Knights downed Merritt Centennials 8-6, Nanaimo Clippers edged Richmond Sockeyes 4-3, and Delta Flyers stretched their winning streak to 10 games with an 8-5 win over the Kelowna Packers.

Knights lead the Interior Division with 13 points, one more than Vernon and Merritt. Kelowna and Salmon Arm share fourth spot with 11 points. Summerland has managed only one victory in 11 outings.

The Lakers did all their scoring during two spurts against the Bucks. Vernon scored three goals within 94 seconds in the first period.

Summerland battled back to tie the game, but the Lakers scored four more goals over nine minutes in the second period.

Mike Paller got two goals for Vernon with singles from Shawn Hendry, Jamie Steer, Mark Greyeyes, Ian Alger, and Greg Parnell. Defencemen Phil Soukoroff and Darcy Martini, along with Steer, added two assists.

Bryan Lafroth, Kirby Muldoe, and Vernon minor hockey graduate Howie Finch replied for the Buckaroos.

Eddie Johnstone, an assistant coach with the Lakers, said his club should have put the game out of reach in the first period. "If we had scored on half of our chances in the first period, it would have been a rout," Johnstone said. "As it was, they stayed close and I got a little worried there for a while."

Glen Fry was impressive in his debut between the pipes for the Lakers. Vernon acquired the 20-year-old netminder this week from Richmond Sockeyes in exchange for goalie Jason Palmer. He finished the night with 38 saves, including 18 in the third period when he blanked the Bucks. Fry looked particularly sharp on shots by Don Burke, Finch, and Laforth.

"Fry made some big saves for us in the second period to keep us ahead," Johnstone said.

At the other end of the rink, Summerland goaltender Rob Nickel kicked out 46 shots and watched another four pucks rattle off his goalposts.

Vernon was assessed 13 of 22 minor penalties.

Johnstone said, "We played with more intensity than the last time we played these guys (a 6-5 loss), but we're still making mistakes in our end. It got pretty sloppy in the third period."

Hendry and Soukoroff were among the best players on the ice for the Lakers. Hendry was shifted from defence to wing for most of the game and responded by scoring once and throwing several punishing bodychecks. Soukoroff did an excellent job moving the puck out of the defensive zone.

Lakers have an opportunity to move into first place when they travel to Salmon Arm, to battle the Tigers, tonight. Vernon's next home game is Oct. 30, against Merritt.

In other games tonight, the red-hot Flyers visit Summerland and Penticton travels to Merritt.