Vernon's affiliate leads Kootenay loop

INVERMERE (Special) — Vernon Lakers have some great prospects down on the farm.

Vernon's junior 'B' affiliate, the Columbia Valley Rockies, share first place going into weekend action in the Kootenay International Hockey League.

The Rockies stretched their winning streak to six games with an 8-5 victory over the Cranbrook Colts, Tuesday night. Columbia Valley and Spokane have 12 points, four more than Cranbrook, the defending B.C. champion.

"I'm a little surprised we got off to such a good start," said Columbia Valley Coach Tom Renney. "I didn't underestimate what we could do, but our team came together a lot quicker than I thought it would."

Eight players who attended Vernon's training camp have made significant contributions to the Rockies, according to Renney.

Defencemen Brian Dicken of Fernie, Dean Zayonse of Kelowna, Kevin Zakall of Oliver, Jason Marshall of Cranbrook, and Kent Oczkowski of Calgary along with forwards Ian Young of Vernon, Scott Salmon of Creston, and David Zakall of Oliver were sent to Columbia Valley by the Lakers.

"Salmon is a great 16-year-old prospect, Young has really added spark to our club, and Dicken has been very steady," Renney said. But, the player who has drawn the most praise from his coach is Marshall.

"Marshall is a blue chip prospect," Renney said. "I don't know why he left there (his hometown, Cranbrook), but I'm sure glad he did."

A willingness to learn and a desire to play hockey are the traits that have impressed Renney. "They're enthusiastic . . . and they want to learn the game," he said.