LAKERS HOST CLIPPERS

Defenceman recovering from two ankle operations

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

When the Vernon Lakers host the Nanaimo Clippers tonight, one player who won't step on the ice is defenceman Greg Olson.

Olson has been on the ice for about 20 minutes per day for the past three weeks. But, unfortunately for the Lakers and Olson, the ice his body comes in contact with is in bags, wrapped around his ankles.

The 18-year-old rearguard has undergone two operations this autumn to remove bone spurs from his ankles.

The bone spurs had bothered him for two years, but the pain reached an unbearable level during the Lakers' training camp in September.

"It had been gradually getting worse," Olson said. "When I put my skates on at camp, I couldn't stand it."

He played one exhibition game against the Kelowna Packers and two periods against the Penticton Knights before realizing he could no longer play without some form of treatment.

He tried several weeks of physiotherapy, but after no noticeable improvement, he had surgery on his left ankle Oct. 14. An operation on his other ankle followed Nov. 6.

"It has been really frustrating and disappointing sitting in the stands . . . watching the games," the 18-year-old defenceman said. "The worst thing is that I see mistakes guys make and I can't do anything about it . . . just watch."

And he'll be watching from the stands for at least another six weeks. "I hope to start skating during the Christmas break and I'd like to play Jan. 5 (first league game of 1988)."

Olson's return can't be too soon for the Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis. "We miss Greg . . . there is no doubt about it," Lis said. "You can't take a second all-star out of your lineup and not miss him."

The Kamloops native had been expected to shift from defence to forward during his second season with the Lakers, but that experiment will probably be scrapped now according to Lis.

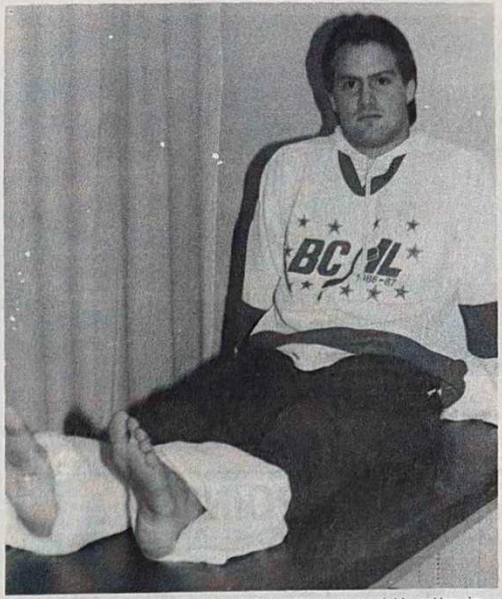
"Our forward lines are pretty well set," Lis said. "But we need help on defence. Greg is a great penalty killer and I think he'll make a big difference to our club when we are shorthanded."

While delaying the resumption of his junior hockey career, the injuries may have also postponed Olson's trip to an American college. He had hoped to land a hockey scholarship this season, but now admits he will probably have to spend one more year in Vernon to catch the attention of the U.S. college scouts.

"I've talked to a few schools, including San Diego and Michigan Tech, but I think I'll probably play in Vernon again next year," he said. "Because of the injury, a lot of scouts won't get an opportunity to watch me play much this season."

Game time tonight is 8 p.m.

Meanwhile in BCJHL action Friday night, Kelowna Packers once again took over first place in the Interior Division following a 4-2 decision against Penticton Knights. And, visiting Nanaimo Clippers doubled the Summerland Buckaroos 6-3 while in a Coastal Division matchup the Chilliwack Eagles edged the Abbotsford Falcons 8-7.



GREG OLSON is spending a lot of time with ice around his ankles, instead of under his skates. The 18-year-old defenceman is recovering from operations to remove bone spurs from his ankles.

(Daily News Photo)

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