JUDDS JOURNAL

Lakers remain in first place



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Certainly there is no such thing as a good loss but where the Vernon Lakers are concerned, dropping a 6-5 overtime decision to the Penticton Knights at the Civic Arena last Saturday night left them no worse off than they had been.

Of course the local club could have done themselves a favor by coming up on the winning end of the stick, but in view of the relative parity of the B.C. Junior Hockey League this season, losing your seventh game in 25 starts is a pretty impressive record.

If you're going to lose hockey games, timing is a good ingredient and in this situation the timing was proper... expecially since the bothersome Kelowna Packers have seen fit to go into something of a tailspin.

The Packers have been jockeying back and forth with the Lakers for first place in the Interior Division ever since the season opened, but after losing three consecutive games last weekend, the Packers have placed their hopes for a first place finish in jeopardy.

The Regatta City squad trails Vernon by two points and the Lakers have three games in hand. That definitely leaves the ball in Vernon's court for the time being. How the local club conducts itself on the ice in the near future may go a long way toward securing first place in the Interior and a subsequent home-ice advantage for the playoffs.

And nothing is going to be easy for the hometown squad in the coming months of the regular season.

December and January represent the toughest portion of the schedule for the Lakers. For instance, they will play nine times during the first three weeks of December. Only three of those games will take place on home-ice and three of the away games will take place during a road trip to Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.

Mind you, the Lakers will enjoy a generous holiday between Dec. 20 and Jan. 5 when the season recommences following the Christmas break. During January, Vernon will play 13 games including another road trip to the Coastal Division's three Lower Mainland area teams. They will play the powerful Delta Flyers twice in the same week.

Under these circumstances, winning games on home ice become even more important. Even though the club has enjoyed tremendous success on the road this season, the shear number of road games, combined with excessive travel, will begin to take its toll eventually.

A short while ago it looked as though the Interior Division fight was going to be more or less a two-team battle between the Lakers and Kelowna. With the home-ice loss to Penticton Saturday night, a rethinking of that concept may be in order.

The Knights appear to be in the process of playing their way out of the early-season doldrums. You have to think that winning a game against the division leader in their barn would be a great confidence booster. Penticton trails Merritt by just two points and are eight points back of Kelowna. However, like Vernon, they have three games in hand on both Kelowna and Merritt so there's a contention that the Knights will improve their standing in the near future.

What's more, the tough, physical style the Knights exhibited Saturday night is an indication of how tough they might be come playoff time. Wiser still to finish in first place and hope that Penticton and either Kelowna or Merritt wear themselves down in a long grinding semi-final series.

However, let's not put the cart in front of the horse at this point. There are still a few matters to clear up on the home front before the Lakers can expect to receive the title trophy for the Interior Division.

Communication proved to be a big factor in the Lakers' loss on Saturday and once again a lack of discipline hurt the club.

In at least three situations a lack of communication cost the club important goals. Once they were caught changing lines just as the Knights were rushing up the ice. The result was breakaway and go-ahead goal.

On another occasion, the last man back began stickhandling the puck with his head down. The rushing Knights forced him to cough up the puck and the result was a three-on-one break that netted Penticton the winning goal in overtime.

However, in the dying minute of regulation time, a little communication between the three Vernon players facing one Knight defender might have at least given them a shot on goal if not the winning goal.

The bottom line is the club needs work in this area.

As for discipline, the Lakers took unneccessary penalties again, costing them one power-play goal and the use of their best defenceman early in the game. Veteran blueliner Wes Elliott was goaded into a fight by an expendable Penticton player, helping to open the door to the Vernon net for the rest of the night.

Perhaps it seems a bit like nit-picking bringing up such seemingly trivial items. But when a team has as much talent and as much momentum as the Lakers do, it's the little things that become important.

Think of it as fine-tuning an exotic sports car.

BCJHL

(Not including games played Tuesday night)

Coastal Division

	W	L	T	F	A	P
Delta	21	5	0	178	88	42
Nanaimo	14	11	1	131	124	29
Richmond	14	12	1	160	127	29
J De Fuca	11	11	1	116	107	23
Chilliwack	10	15	0	120	176	20
Abbotsford	9	18	1	142	170	19

Interior Division

Vernon	18	7	0	185	99	36
Kelowna	16	10	2	132	112	34
Merritt	15	13	0	157	169	30
Penticton	13	12	0	149	129	26
Salmon Arm	9	17	1	133	161	19
Summer	3	22	1	101	234	7

SCORING

Coastal

	G	A	Pts	Pim
Holmes, P	31	37	68	27
MacDonald, D	30	34	64	30
Butterworth, J	24	34	58	8
McDonald, D	21	27	48	4
Van Sickle J	30	16	46	37
Biagioni, B	11	35	46	153
Parkes, C	23	21	44	44
Clarke, R	22	22	44	156
Methorst, D	20	24	44	81
Zulinick, R	14	29	43	8

Interior

	G	A	Pts	Pim
Biller, F	36	28	64	146
Steer, J	25	33	58	8
Rushton, A	15	35	50	37
Drake, D	11	38	49	12
Greyeyes, M	19	28	47	37
Alger, I	22	22	44	89
Hilditch, T	15	29	44	29
Bianchini, B	18	23	41	68
McGowan, C	12	29	41	32
Smiley, B	17	21	38	36

GOALTENDERS

	MP	GA	Avg.
Fry, G	1071	57	3.19
Austin, S	411	21	3.06
Casey, D	760	43	3.39
Rysz, B	470	35	4.47
Loewen, J	912	72	4.73

KNIGHTS TRIM TIGERS

Vernon has a busy week

The Vernon Lakers have an opportunity to strengthen their grip on first place when they play three games, in three nights, this week.

Lakers currently lead the Kelowna Packers by two points in the battle for top spot in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division. And Vernon has three games-in-hand.

The Lakers travel to Merritt, Thursday; host the Summerland Buckaroos, Friday; and entertain the Juan de Fuca Whalers, Saturday.

Vernon General Manager Mel Lis said he expects his club to gain some breathing room this week. "We're looking for three wins," Lis said.

However, he cautioned his club not to take anyone lightly. "I think everyone in the league plays 30 per cent better against us," he said. "We can't afford to let down against anyone . . . or we'll lose."

The Lakers are healthy with the exception of defenceman Greg Olson and centre Greg Parnell. Olson is still recovering from ankle surgery and Parnell has been sidelined for two weeks due to a shoulder injury. Parnell is listed as a doubtful starter this week.

Meanwhile, the Penticton Knights are getting used to playing overtime games.

They played their third in a row Tuesday night and emerged with a 3-2 verdict over the Salmon Arm Tigers after beating the Lakers 6-5 Saturday and losing in overtime Friday night.

"I anticipated the slow start after the high we were on in Vernon," said Knights' coach Dwayne Pentland. "I would have thought that we would have scored a few more goals . . . but we managed to hang on."

Hanging on was all the Knights could do when Ivan Moore was assessed a five-minute major at 12:52 of third period and Salmon Arm tied the game 2-2.

In other games, the Delta Flyers strafed the Chilliwack Eagles 12-2 to pad their Coastal Division lead while the Juan de Fuca Whalers won 4-2 in Abbotsford against the Falcons.

LOEWEN HOT

In Penticton, Pentland credited veteran goalie Jamie Loewen who turned in a 42-save performance while Curt Brennan scored 7:14 of overtime to give the Knights the victory.

Penticton also got goals from Brad Smiley and Moore while Graham Bewley and Warren Carter tallied for the Tigers.

Juan de Fuca also had a hot goalie as Byron Dafoe stopped 45 shots, including 20 in the scoreless first period.

Ian Doak scored twice for Juan de Fuca while Todd Sawtell and Randy Zulinik completed the Victoria club's attack. Trent McNabb and Blaine Moore were the Abbotsford marksmen.

Peter Holmes and Scott Frizzell contributed thjree goals apiece for the Flyers in Delta. Aaron Nosky added two more for the Flyers who led 2-1 and 7-2 at the period breaks.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Milliken leads Maroons to win

The Clarence Fulton Maroons dumped the Rutland Voodoos 78-57 in exhibition boys' basketball action, Tuesday night, at Fulton. Sean Milliken led the Maroons with 26 points while Todd Dulaba added 12. A total of 12 Fulton players shared in the scoring. Shane Bishop was the top sniper for the Voodoos with 19 points. Rutland jumped to an 8-0 lead, but Fulton was in front 40-24 by half-time.

Bowling tourney

Marv Krantz of Salmon Arm rolled a 12-game total of 3192 to win the recent Grey Cup Bowling Marathon at the Polson Bowling Centre. Krantz finished 31 pins ahead of second place Art Block of Vernon. Mark Friebe of Enderby won the handicap title with a 3547 total. Marie MacKenzie of Vernon was runner-up in handicap play with a 3434 total. Krantz, with 413, and Block, with 403,

Ungerman's card Tuesday now will feature Willy Featherstone of Toronto against Danny Lindstrom of Fort McMurray, Alta., in a light heavyweight 12-rounder.

In another bout, Canadian welterweight champ Donovan Boucher of Toronto will meet Wardle Langston of Milltown, Ohio, in a 10-round, non-title fight.

Bell honored

TORONTO (CP) — Two weeks