DENNIS SCORES WINNING GOAL

Vernon edges Salmon Arm 4-3

Duane Dennis scored with 1:28 remaining in the third period to give the Vernon Lakers a 4-3 win over the Salmon Arm Tigers in B.C. Junior Hockey League action, Thursday night, in Salmon Arm.

The victory gives the Lakers 42 points, six more than the second place Kelowna Packers. And Vernon has one game-in-hand.

The Lakers saw a 3-0 lead disappear when the Tigers scored two power-play goals in the second period and added an even strength goal in the third.

Dennis then scored the winner when he pounced on a loose puck behind Salmon Arm netminder Gord Webber. Dane Jackson's long shot bounced off Webber's glove and landed near the goal line. Webber couldn't find the puck, but Dennis did.

Vernon Head Coach Ernie Gare said that after his club missed numerous scoring opportunities, it was ironic that the winning goal was scored on a fluke play.

"It wasn't pretty, but they all count," Gare said.

Dallas Drake, Mike Paller, and defenceman Keith Chase, with his first goal of the season, gave the Lakers a 3-0 cushion.

Brad Neumeier scored twice in the second period and completed his hat trick in the third for the Tigers.

Gare said, "We played well in the first period and we up 3-0. We had lots of changes in the last two periods, but their goalie made some big saves and we put some shots off the goalposts."

Drake, who has collected two assists, and Mark Greyeyes both hit posts in the third period.

Vernon netminder Glen Fry finished the night with 42 saves while Webber blocked 38 shots.

The game marked the return of Vernon centre Greg Parnell, who was sidelined more than three weeks due to a shoulder injury. Parnell saw only limited duty in Salmon Arm, but the shoulder felt fine and he will play again tonight when the same two clubs tangle at the Vernon Civic Arena. Game time is 8 p.m.

On Saturday, the Lakers have an opportunity to leave the Packers in their dust when they travel to Kelowna.

In other BCJHL games Thursday, the Abbotsford Falcons trimmed the visiting Penticton Knights 3-1 and the Juan de Fuca Whalers thumped the Summerland Buckaroos 7-1, in Victoria.

Two goals by Blaine Moore were all the Falcons needed against the Knights, who occupy fourth spot in the Interior Division.

Mike Van Sickle scored three goals and added two assists to lead the Whalers. Former Laker Todd Demchuk tallied once for Juan de Fuca.

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Hoop battle starts tonight

'The Battle of Vernon' starts tonight at Vernon Secondary School.

Bragging rights and basketball supremacy in the North Okanagan will be on the line when the Vernon Panthers host the Fulton Maroons at 7 p.m. The same two clubs clash Saturday, at Fulton. The battle concludes with another home-and-home series Jan. 22 and 23.

Maroons' Coach Bob Shannon said the confrontations are not typical exhibition games. "Our guys are really up for the games," Shannon said. "I'm sure there will be big crowds at both games this weekend."

Vernon Panthers won the initial battle two years ago . . . a season in which they placed second in the provincial "AA' championships. The Maroons evened the series last year and are favored to win again this weekend.

Fulton is currently ranked third in B.C. among 'A' schools. The Panthers still compete at the "AA' level, but lack the experience and depth enjoyed by the Maroons.

Fulton won the recent Salmon Arm Golds Tournament and split a pair of exhibition games with the Penticton Lakers. VSS, on the other hand, held its first full scrimmage four days ago. The Panthers were unable to practice until Monday because several players were involved with the school's volleyball team, which placed sixth in last weekend's provincial finals.

Shannon said, "If we play our game, we should win. But, you never know what is going to happen in an emotional game . . . and these will be emotional games."



GOLDEN CROWN'S Wilf Haak hands off a pass to Norm Korol (22) during Fosters Lager Basketball League action, Thursday night. Attempting to block the pass are Ted Vanderwal and Art Dulaba of Okanagan College. Haak scored 20 points to lead Golden Crown to an 85-80 win.

(Daily News Photo)

Lakers tough on the road

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home . . . but for the Vernon Lakers anyplace but home seems to be more to their liking.

The local junior hockey club has turned in some mediocre performances on home ice this season, but on the road they are virtually unbeatable and they have the statistics to prove it. The Lakers haven't lost an away game since Sept. 29 when they were humiliated by the then lowly Summerland Buckaroos.

Since then the Buckaroos have become one of the most improved teams in the league but the experience of Sept. 29 must have been too much for the Vernon hockey club to bear. Following their defeat at the hands of the Bucks, the club has put together a string of 10 consecutive victories including Thursday night's 4-3 win in Salmon Arm.

Meanwhile, the Interior Division leading Lakers have defied the general logic of hockey teams everywhere by compiling a worse record at home than they have on the road. To date they have won 11 games and lost five at the Vernon Civic Arena, including three losses in their past eight starts at the Vernon ice palace.

"The sad part about the whole deal (loss in Summerland) was that it embarrassed our veteran players and me so much," suggested Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis. "But, we didn't come prepared for that game — a lot of the guys just figured you had to show up in Summerland and collect three goals and a couple of assists each.

"You shouldn't be embarrassed about a loss but it was just the way we lost it I think and that really struck home with our players at the time."

There may be some logic behind the phenomenon, however, as Lis also tried to point out. The Civic Arena is one of the smallest ice surfaces in the entire B.C. Junior Hockey League and while that has worked to the advantage of some previous Vernon teams, it seems to work against the current edition.

"Most other arenas are bigger than our own and since we skate so well we do better in those rinks," he explained. "Also, the pressure of friends and relatives isn't with them on the road.

"I think the guys guys are more together on our away games. They really don't talk enough hockey at home whereas on the road we're closer to one another in that bus atmosphere so we tend to talk and think more about hockey while we're on the road."

Whatever the reason may be, Lis isn't about to object to the reverse run of luck his club is experiencing this season. In fact, he may even be getting a tad superstitious about it as hockey people tend to be.

"Maybe we shouldn't be talking about it because I don't want to jinx them," he proclaimed.

The Lakers will have their work cut out for them if they want to continue their winning ways on the road as they will play four more times outside of the Civic Arena before Christmas. That includes a three-game road-trip to the Coastal Division next week where they will play in Abbotsford, Nanaimo and Juan De Fuca. The jaunt through Vancouver Island could provie difficult for the club. The Clippers have the biggest team in the league and when the Nanaimo team played here, it took a heavy physical toll on the Lakers in spite of the fact that the local club handled them quite easily on the scoreboard.

Juan De Fuca Whalers was one of the visiting clubs that has stolen a victory from the Lakers at the Civic Arena, so they will likely prove to be a formidable foe on their home ice.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Panthers win season opener

The Vernon Lady Panthers dumped the Kamloops Red Angels 76-54 in the Okanagan-Mainline Senior Girls "AA' Basketball League season opener, Wednesday, in Kamloops. Four Vernon players hit double figures and all 11 team members scored at least two points. Corinne Vanderwal led the attack with 17 points while Kristen Brodoway added 13, Jennifer Jones sunk 12, and Tracy Penno collected 10. The Lady Panthers are idle until next Thursday when they host the Kelowna Owlettes.

Dibski is hot

Paula Dibski scored 30 points to lead the Vernon Panthers to a 60-25 win over Charles Bloom of Lumby, in North Zone Junior Girls' Basketball League play, Thursday. Vernon, which has a 2-0 record in league play, travels to Kamloops this weekend for the annual Westsyde Junior Tournament.

Leblanc recalled

VANCOUVER (CP) — The injury-riddled Vancouver Canucks have been forced to dip into the minors again, this time calling up leftwinger John Leblanc from the Fredericton Express of the American Hockey League.

Leblanc is expected to report to the National Hockey League club today and be available for Saturday night's game here against the Edmonton Oilers.

He has seen action in two games with the Canucks this season but has no scoring points.

Currently on the shelf for the Canucks are Tony Tanti (foot), Richard Brodeur (pulled groin), Willie Huber (sprained knee), Larry Melnyk (cut around the eye), David Bruce (mononeucleosis) and Dan Hodgson (broken leg).

Defencemen Daryl Stanley (strained shoulder) and Dave Richter (sprained knee) have been practising and are expected to play.

Chelios sidelined

MONTREAL (CP) — The Montreal Canadiens had the day off to nurse their wounds Thursday, but the injury report is apparently not as gloomy as originally feared.

Defenceman Chris Chelios has a broken bone in his left hand, near the knuckle of his little finger.

The length of his absence probably won't be determined until the swelling is down.

eback by the Soviets, who trailed 3-1 midway in the second period and 3-2 after two.

"We're a little disappointed with the outcome," said Tom Watt, a Canadian assistant coach. "To have a goal scored with 2½ minutes to go ... you like to think you can come out of a game like that with a win."

The Selects tied the score when Canadian goaltender Andy Moog kicked out at a shot by Sergei Vostrikov and Kharin, a member of the Soviet national team, tucked the rebound into the net.

Marc Habscheid, Cliff Ronning and Vaughn Karpan scored for Canada while Sergei Nemchinov and Valery Bragin collected the other Soviet goals.

USA wins

RICHFIELD, Ohio (AP) — Scott Fusco had two goals and two assists as Team USA defeated a team of Soviet all-stars 8-5 Thursday night in the first of an eight-game exhibition hockey series.

86ers sign

VANCOUVER (CP) — General manager Buzz Parsons and coach Bobby Lenarduzzi have signed one-year contracts with the Vancouver 86ers, the Canadian Soccer League club announced Thursday.

The team also announced it has acquired the playing rights to CSL all-star goalkeeper Sven Habermann in a cash deal with the league champion Calgary Kickers.

Habermann has played 18 international games with the Canadian national team.

NFL in Montreal

MONTREAL (CP) — Jim Kensil, president of the New York Jets, says there are two reasons his club will play a National Football League exhibition game here next summer.

Three teams in tight race

The Kokanee Masters extended their winning streak to six games with a 71-62 win over the Squires Four B's in Fosters Lager Basketball League action, Thursday, at the Priest Valley Gymnasium.

But despite their perfect record, the Masters don't have much breathing room atop the loop. The Golden Crown Restaurant and Squires Four Pub remained within two points of the Masters by improving their records to 5-1, Thursday.

Golden Crown downed Okanagan College 85-80 and Squires Four blasted Apple Lane Restaurant 91-59. In another game, National Hotel trimmed Spallumcheen Golf Club 79-75.

Tony Wolcott was the offensive star for the Masters with 30 points while Bill Pitcher and Dave Giddings added 12 apiece.

Mike Enemark replied with 17 points for the B's, who are winless in six College, which has managed only one victory in six games.

Squires Four held a 39-34 edge at half-time and ran away from Apple Lane in the second half.

Lorne Babiuk sunk 21 points for Squires Four while Rick Wilson sunk 17 and Stu Graham added 16.

Sandy Steinley handled most of the offence for Apple Lane with 26 points.

National Hotel and Spallumcheen changed leads seven times in the second half before the Hotelmen emerged victorious.

Mark Boppre supplied the firepower for National Hotel with 31 points while Joe Little and Pat Clemens added 12 apiece.

Randy Ahl and Sean Chippendale countered with 23 points each for the Golfers.

Swiss skier victorious

LEUKERBAD, Switzerland (AP) — Michela Figini of Switzerland skied to her first victory of the season in a women's World Cup downhill race today, holding off a tough Austrian challenge led by runner-up Sigrid Wolf.

Laurie Graham of Inglewood, Ont., was Canada's top performer, placing fifth, nearly a full second behind Figini, while Karen Percy of Banff, Alta., was eighth. The remaining Canadians finished well back.

Starting first, Figini finished in one minute, 50.52 seconds over the tough course, whose 2,575-metre length proved exhausting for the racers. Wolf, winner of the season's first super giant slalom at Sestriere, Italy, picked up time on the lower part of the course, but finished 12 one-hundredths of a second behind.

Brigitte Oertli of Switzerland was third in 1:50.91, followed by Elisabeth Kirchler of Austria in 1:50.94 and Graham in 1:51.44.

Another Austrian, Sylvia Eder, took seventh place in the winter's debut race in Switzerland. Percy was next, clocking 1:51.75.

Other Canadian results were: Kerrin Lee of Rossland, B.C., 28th in 1:53.63; Kellie Casey of Collingwood, Ont., 37th in 1:54.53, and Karen Stemmle of Aurora, Ont., 41st in 1:55.50.

Figini's triumph in the season's third downhill maintained the Swiss winning streak in the discipline. Maria Walliser and little-known Chantal Bournissen posted victories in the opening pair of races last week at Val d'Isere, France.

Walliser, the downhill world champion and last season's overall World Cup winner, appeared to go easy after bruising neck and shoulders in a crash on the course's treacherous bumps in final practice Thursday. She finished sixth, 98 one-hundredths of a second slower than Figini.