# Busy month ahead

There's bad news and good news awaiting the Vernon Lakers when they resume their regular season schedule in the B.C. Junior Hockey League in the new year.

The bad news is that the club has to play 13 games in just 25 days during the long, lonely month of January. The good news is that they get to play nine of those 13 games on the road.

Ordinarily the road portion of the schedule would be received with despair on most hockey clubs, but not so for the Lakers. The local Junior A squad sports the best road record in the BCJHL at 14-3, and they have won 14 straight games as the visiting team. They wound down their 1987 schedule with four consecutive wins on the road, including three in three days during a sweep of Coastal Division opposition.

And, if you take the BCJHL all-star game into account, many star members of the Vernon team will play 14 games during January. In addition to Head Coach Ernie Gare, who will coach the Interior Division all-star team, eight members of the Lakers were chosen to represent the Interior.

The all-star game, which takes place in Abbotsford, coincides with the club's second three-game swing through the Lower Mainland. Lakers play Jan. 15, 16, and 17 in Abbotsford, Delta, and Richmond, respectively, then pause for a day before the all-star game Jan. 19.

Other road games in January include stops in Salmon Arm (Jan. 7); Kelowna (Jan. 8, Jan. 22); Merritt (Jan. 28); Summerland (Jan. 29).

At home, Lakers will entertain Salmon Arm (Jan. 5), Abbotsford (Jan. 9), Kelowna (Jan. 23), and Delta Flyers (Jan. 30).

"By the middle of the month we should either have first place clinched or else we'll know if we're going to be struggling," suggested Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis.

The Lakers are 16 points ahead of their closest rivals, Kelowna Packers, in the Interior, and trail Delta Flyers by just two points in the overall picture. Therefore, the two games against the Flyers in January could go a long way towards determining the overall title.

Lis also feels that the teams will be a bit tougher in general in the second half of the season, particularly in the Interior Division where the late surge by both Summerland and Salmon Arm has made every future playing date a tough one.

"The fist half of the season you're just sort of dancing with all the girls," said Lis in his analagous fashion of speech. "In the second half you start looking for the bride."

The Lakers report back from their extended Christmas break on Jan. 2. However, Lis feels that most of his players have developed a healthy attitude about staying in shape.

"Two days after we got home (from road trip to Coast) a lot of the guys were phoning to see if they could go out and practice," he said.