LAKERS ON THE ROAD TONIGHT

Gare handed two-game suspension



If the Vernon Lakers have any hopes of sweeping their home-and-home series against the Kelowna Packers this weekend they'll have to do it without the services of Head Coach Ernie.

Gare, in his second season behind the vernon bench, was handed down a two-game suspension, effective immediately, by Vice President, Interior Division, Vern Dye as punishment for his involvement in an incidence of verbal abuse directed against a B.C. Junior Hockey League referee.

Assistant Coach Eddie Johnstone received a one-game suspension from the same incident.

The situation developed Jan. 8 after the Lakers lost a 4-3 decision to the Kelowna Packers. The loss ended a 15-game road winning streak by the local club and Gare apparently showed his frustration and anger at the officiating by referee Rob McInnes.

"I wasn't happy with the game he called and I thought it took our chances to win away," explained Gare of the incident. According to Gare the Lakers received three extra major penalties and defenceman Keith Chase was handed a match penalty which eventually cost him a six-game suspension as well. Gare said that his team was left short-handed for 16 minutes during the second period alone and that he felt the officiating was unjust and one-sided in Kelowna's favor.



ERNIE GARE



ED JOHNSTONE

Meanwhile, Gare's other assistant, George Fargher, will be the only man behind the Vernon bench for the pair of crucial weekend games which could clinch first place in the Interior Division for the Lakers should they sweep the series.

Although they aren't happy with the league's decision on the matter, Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis said that the club won't appeal the decision. Lis also said that the suspension shouldn't hurt the club in the long run either.

"If there is a suspension it's never a good one but it's better that you have it now instead of in the playoffs or something," said Lis. "We're not going to appeal it though."

On the contrary, Gare, who is normally rather sedated and calm behind the Vernon bench, feels that an incident of this nature could have a positive effect on the team.

"Hopefully this will give our guys more incentive to beat them (Packers) this weekend," he suggested. "It could end up being to our advantage.

The Lakers currently lead the Interior Division by 20 points over second place Kelowna.

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