VERNON 5, KELOWNA 4

Lakers clinch first place

The Vernon Lakers clinched first place in the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Division with a 5-4 win, in overtime, over the Kelowna Packers, Friday night, in Kelowna.

The victory moves the streaking Lakers 22 points ahead of the second place Packers, with 11 games remaining.

Vernon is unbeaten in five outings, including four consecutive wins on the road. The Lakers have lost only once in their last 20 games away from home.

Dallas Drake scored at 1:03 of sudden-death overtime to lift Vernon past the Packers.

The Lakers led 3-0 at the end of the first period and 4-3 after the second, but Chris Hicks' goal at 2:36 of the third period tied the game to force overtime.

Chad Biafore scored twice for Vernon while Ian Alger and Darren Hlarsa added singles.

Todd Patz, Mike Kasubuchi and Scott Hargreaves scored the other Kelowna goals.

Assistant Coach George Fargher was behind the Vernon bench while Hed Coach Ernie Gare and Assistant Coach Eddie Johnstone, who were both suspended, watched from the press box. Gare is suspended for two games and Johnstone was suspended for one game as the result of an incident, involving the officials, after a Jan. 8 game in Kelowna.

Gare felt his club should have won Friday's game by three or four goals. "It shouldn't have been so close," Gare said. "I thought we played a pretty good first period and then we let them back in the game in the second. But, we completely dominated the third period. (Goalie Tony) Hidebrand was outstanding. He made some saves I couldn't believe. I don't know how many chances we had from right in front of their net."

The Packers have an opportunity for revenge tonight when they visit Vernon, at 8 p.m. The first 500 fans through the door will receive a Lakers' team calendar.

Meanwhile, members of the Nanaimo Clippers had a choice Friday night . . . do what their coach said or watch their game from the stands.

They decided to obey the coach and dominated the Penticton Knights 7-1.

"Our whole defence played a super game," said Nanaimo coach Larry McNabb.

"It was simple positional hockey and I told the guys if they didn't want to play that way they could sit in the stands."

Goalie Damian Holland made 30 saves for the Clippers, and McNabb said the defence helped by clearing rebounds.

Nanaimo led 3-0 at the end of the first period and 6-1 at the end of the second.

Laurence Amy and Todd Finner scored two goals each for Nanaimo. Corky Parkes, Sean Stotts and Matt Woods added singles.

CENTENNIALS 7 BUCKAROOS 1

In Summerland, Al Rushton, Richard Brew and Paul Krause scored two goals each for the Centennials. Bill Birks added a single.

Merritt, which outshot Summerland 51-18, led 4-1 at the end of the first period and 5-1 at the end of the second.

Howie Finch scored for Summerland.

