SERIES COULD END TONIGHT

Lakers humble Centennials 10-4



DALLAS DRAKE was a nuisance all night long for Merritt goaltender Gord Besse. Drake scored once during the night and had a number of chances but it was forward Greg Parnell who did most of the damage on the scoreboard with four goals and a pair of assists. The Lakers won the game 10-4 and can wrap up their best-of-seven series with the Centennials tonight in Merritt. (Daily News Photo)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

With a 10-4 victory over the Merritt Centennials Friday night at the Civic Arena, the Vernon Lakers are now just one game away from saying over and out to their B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division semi-final series as well.

A new hero, Greg Parnell, has risen from the ashes to become the leading figure in this early playoff series, scoring four goals and adding two assists to power the hometown squad to their lopsided win before a somewhat subdued crowd of more than 1,000 fans.

Albeit their boredom was derived from the officiating rather than the game itself. Referee Rob McInnes succeeded in slowing the game to a snail's pace with an overabundance of whistle-blowing and an inability to keep things operating smoothly.

At one point McInnes had the house sit restlessly for more than 15 minutes while he tried to restore order to a situation that really didn't call for any sort of drastic measures at all.

Naturally the situation didn't sit well with either team but especially not with the Vernon coaching staff. Both Head Coach Ernie Gare and Assistant Coach Ed Johnstone had been suspended earlier this season for a post-game run-in with McInnes after a similar kind of game in Kelowna.

"You don't have to say anything about the officiating — his (McInnes') actions spoke for themselves — he ruined the game," suggested Gare.

Meanwhile, Parnell, who has been the star of the game in all three series games to date, scored once in the first period, once in the second, and twice in the third as the Vernon club brought their scoring difficulties to an end.

Parnell also set up goals by Duane Dennis and Chad Biafore. Mark Greyeyes, Dallas Drake, Jamie Steer and Wes Elliott also had goals for the Lakers who led 3-1 and 7-2 by periods.

Drake, in the lineup for the first time since the playoffs began, was a nuisance to the Centennials all night long and only narrowly missed on a half dozen scoring opportunities. His presence obviously had an effect on the team which seemed to play with more confidence with him in the lineup.

However, Gare was full of good words for Parnell who seldom steped out of the shadows during the regular season.

"In this series he's been our best forward," said Gare. "He sees the ice so well and usually he just sets the play up but tonight he was scoring."

Bill Birks notched his fourth and fifth goals of the series for Merritt while Richard Brew and Pat Corrado also had goals for the Centennials.

Glen Fry made 28 saves for the Lakers, including a save off Frank Biller who was in all alone in the second period. Gord Besse was shell-shocked by the Lakers, facing 52 shots in all.

Game four of the series takes place tonight in Merritt and Gare would dearly love to wrap things up and take a week off before the next series begins.

"They (Merritt) won't go down without a fight but if we stick to our game plan we should have no trouble in their barn tonight," he said.

Meanwhile, in Kelowna Friday night, the hometown Packers put the Penticton Knights on the ropes with a 3-2 victory that gives them a 3-0 lead in the other Interior Division semi-final series.

Doug Gardner, Brian Lofroth and Tom Cross each scored once for the Packers while Lance Momotani and Todd Hilditch replied for the Knights who are in danger of being swept out of the playoffs for the second straight year.

In other BCJHL playoff action Friday night the Juan De Fuca Whalers stayed alive with a 6-5 overtime victory against the Richmond Sockeyes while in Delta the Flyers shaded the Nanaimo Clippers 6-5 to take a 2-1 lead in their best-of-seven series.

All four series resume tonight.

Vernon Daily News | sports
Editor — DON KENDALL

Red Deer 7 St. Albert 2

B.C. Junior

Vernon 10 Merritt 4

(Vernon leads best-of-7 quarter-final 3-0)

Kelowna 3 Penticton 2 1

(Kelowna leads best-of-7 quarter-final 3-0)