SERIES STARTS FRIDAY

Lakers meet Knights in division final



MIKE BARKLEY, left, hams it up with Trevor Pohl during a Vernon Lakers' practice this week. Barkley and Pohl have been out of the lineup with injured shoulders but Barkley, and perhaps Pohl, will return Friday night when the Interior Division championship series opens at the Civic Arena. (Daily News Photo)

The Vernon Lakers host the Penticton Knights, Friday night, in the opening game of the B.C. Junior Hockey League's Interior Divison final series.

The Knights capped a four-game comeback, Wednesday, by defeating the Kelowna Packers 6-4.

Kelowna swept the first three games before Penticton won the next three in sudden-death overtime to force the seventh game in Kelowna.

The Knights got goals from Todd Hilditch, Brad Smiley, Shayne Green, Darryl Mitchell, Brad Heschuk, and Cliff Furnseth.

Bruce Bianchini, with two goals, Tom Cross, and Don Burke replied for the Packers.

The Lakers swept their series against the Merritt Centennials in four straight games.

Vernon Head Coach Ernie Gare said he is surprised the Knights were able to come back from a 3-0 deficit against the Packers. "But Penticton deserved to win the seventh game," said Gare, who watched the confrontation. "The Knights really took it to them . . . the score could have been a lot worse."

The second game in the best-of-seven series is scheduled Saturday, in Penticton. The series shifts back to Vernon for the third game, Tuesday.

Vernon struggled in its first two games against the Centennials, but the return of all-star centre Dallas Drake appeared to spark the club in the third and fourth outings. Drake had been sidelined by a hand injury.

Right winger Mike Barkley, who missed the entire Merritt series due to a shoulder injury, has recovered and is expected to be back on the ice Friday night.

During his inactivity, Barkley watched his teammates from the press box and picked up some pointers from assistant coach Eddie Johnstone.

"There are things that you wouldn't see unless you were watching from above," suggested Barkley. "Eddie pointed out a lot of things to me as well — things like defensive tricks and so on."

Of course, with Barkley back in the lineup the club will benefit from the scoring touch of a 50-goal forward, but according to Johnstone the team benefits in other ways from Barkley's presence as well.

"His biggest asset is his smartness but he's one of our best defensive players because he plays so well in our own end," explained Johnstone. "He does it all so well you hardly notice him out there."

Barkley will likely be reunited with Drake and winger Mark Greyeyes to reform the team's number one forward unit. This wil take pressure off the equally talented combination of Ian Alger, Greg Parnell and Jamie Steer, who will no doubt inflict as much offensive damage on the opposition.

The third line will feature 20-goal men Dane Jackson, Mike Paller and Duane Dennis and with the option of Trevor Pohl the third line depth is the envy of every other team in the league both offensively and defensively.

However, in spite of the fact that the Knights had to go the distance against the Packers, Johnstone doesn't think they will be too tired to sting.

"They'll be playoff tough and they'll be doing things right," he said. "We're going to have to really be ready to play.

"I think it will be a physical series because Penticton can't skate with us."

Meanwhile, the Delta Flyers and Richmond Sockeyes will clash in the Coastal Division final series.

FLYERS 6 CLIPPERS 1

In Nanaimo, Delta beat the Clippers 6-1 to win the quarter-final series 4-2.

Darren Schwartz, Peter Holmes, Jeff Nottingham, Rich Stentiford, Doug Lawrence and Scott Frizzell scored for Delta.

Nanaimo's only goal came from Grant MacDonald.

Delta goalie Brian Tessier made 44 saves for the win, while Damion Holland and Corey Jones combined in the Nanaimo net to stop 23 shots.

SOCKEYES 6 WHALERS 1

In Victoria, the Sockeyes took an early lead then coasted to victory. The win gave Richmond the quarter-final series 4-2.

Richmond led 4-0 by the end of the first period.

Rob Clark and Wayne Stripp scored two goals each for the Sockeyes. Rick Rozecki and Brad Dickson added singles.

Brent Polischuk spoiled Mike Doyle's shutout bid by scoring with just 23 seconds left in the game.

SERIES SCHEDULE

March 4: Penticton at Vernon.
March 5: Vernon at Penticton.
March 8: Penticton at Vernon.
March 9: Vernon at Penticton.
March 11: Penticton at Vernon (if necessary).
March 12: Vernon at Penticton (if necessary).
March 13: Penticton at Vernon (if necessary).

All games will be played at 8 p.m., except game seven which is scheduled at 7 p.m.

Vernon foursome among final four

SEATON PLAYS TONIGHT

B.C. Junior

Delta 6 Nanaimo 1

(Delta wins best-of-seven quarter-final 4-2)

Penticton 6 Kelowna 4

(Penticton wins best-of-seven quarter-final 4-3)

Richmond 6 Juan de Fuca 1

(Richmond wins best-of-seven quarter-final 4-2)