

THE VERNON LAKERS' medical staff checked over Dallas Drake's right knee after he was felled by a vicious check during the third game of their semi-final series against the Penticton Knights. Drake, the BCJHL scoring champion, has not yet fully recovered and may not be ready for the league final series, which starts Saturday. (Wayne Emde Photo)

SCORING CHAMP INJURED

Drake may miss opener

The Vernon Lakers may be without B.C. Junior Hockey League scoring champion Dallas Drake when they open the championship series this weekend against the Richmond Sockeyes.

Drake has not yet recovered from a bruised knee that he sustained during the third game of the semi-final series with the Penticton Knights. His knee is swollen and he has only limited movement.

"The knee is getting better, but we don't know if he'll be ready for the weekend," said Lakers' Head Coach Ernie Gare. "He is taking physio every day. We probably won't know his status until Friday or early-Saturday."

Defenceman Greg Olson, who suffered a separated shoulder against the Knights, will miss the final series.

"We don't expect Greg back for another two or three weeks," Gare said.

But, on a positive note, wingers Mike Barkley and Trevor Pohl will be in the line-up Saturday night when the Lakers host the Sockeyes.

Barkley and Pohl, who are both recovering from shoulder injuries, saw only limited duty in the first two playoff rounds.

Gare said, "They're both ready to take a regular shift this weekend."

Barkley scored 51 goals during the regular season and is considered one of the top two-way wingers in the BCJHL.

Pohl joined the Lakers in January after splitting the first part of the season between the Portland Winter Hawks and Medicine Hat Tigers of the Western Hockey League. Thhe 20-year-old veteran is particularly adept along the boards and is one of the most feared pugilists in the league.



GREG OLSON



TREVOR POHL

Nordiques move out of basement

By The Canadian Press

The Quebec Nordiques emerged from the basement for the first time in more than two months and promptly declared that they liketheir new quarters so much that they plan on taking up permanent residence.

"It's been a long time getting here but now that we're finally here we're going to stay," head coach Ron Lapointe said after his Nordiques vaulted over the Hartford Whalers into fourth place in the NHL's Adams Division.

A 3-2 Quebec victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs and an 8-6 triumph by the Calgary Flames over the Whalers combined Tuesday night to flip-flop the fourth and final playoff berth in the Adams.

"If I was in (Hartford coach) Larry Pleau's shoes, I'd be worried because we've gained nine points on them in standings ahead of the idle Montreal Canadiens. Mike Bullard, with his 43rd goal, Joe Mullen, Colin Patterson, Al MacInnis and Jiri Hrdina, with his first NHL goal after leaving the Czechoslovakian national team, also scored for the Flames.

Oilers 6 Sabres 4

In Edmonton, Geoff Courtnall scored his first three goals as an Oiler, Craig Simpson fired his 50th of the season and Mark Messier and Craig MacTavish added a goal each for the Oilers. Wayne Gretzky had three assists, edging to within 12 points of league points leader Mario Lemieux.

John Tucker, with two, Christian Ruuttu and Pierre Turgeon scored for Buffalo.

Rangers 3 Flyers 1

In New York, Kelly Kisio and Norm MacIver scored first-period



Officials could ruin series



by
Jim Judd
Daily News
Sports Writer

Everything is set to go — the teams are ready, the coaches are ready, the fans are ready. Now, if we could just lose the referees we might see a decent hockey series, starting this weekend.

Sure it's old hat to direct one's malcontentment towards the officials and we see it all the time. Generally it's the coach of the losing team or, occasionally both coaches might direct some discontented offering in the direction of the referee. Of course the fans are never totally satisfied with the job the officials do so you can virtually count on them to bitch.

In the two playoff series to date involving the Vernon Lakers, all of the above parties have consistently voiced their displeasure with the brand of officiating that has gone on. Include in that group your faithful scribe and all of the other media sources who have covered the games and it pretty well becomes unanimous.

The general consensus among the coaching staff, management, and players on the local club is that the next series would be just as good, probably a lot better even, if there were no officiating whatsoever.

Originally, officials were added to organized sports to ensure that the games would flow smoothly and that neither team could gather an unfair advantage by bending the rules of the game or by cheating in some other fashion. These days it would seem the prime occupation of an official is to slow the game to a crawl, frustrate both teams, and annoy the fans to no end. In a lot of cases it would seem the referee is attempting to have a hand in the outcome of the game, rather than letting the teams decide the winner.

Naturally officials at the junior A hockey level differe greatly in quantity and quality from those who referee at the major junior level. Also, officials often decide to call a different type of game during the playoff season, though they usually opt for a more wide-open, rougher style of play allowing speed and physical advantage to run their due course in the overall scheme of things on the ice.

It is unfortunate that the type of officiating, to date, has been of such substandard quality. It is a poor reflection on the best junior A hockey league in the country and it says very little for the education these officials received from the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association.

It was apparent in several of the playoff games that the major concern of the referee was that the number of penalty minutes by both teams be virtually equal at game's end and that the total not exceed the average number of minutes per game. We saw it happen in a number of games — calling a rash of penalties on one team then evening up the tally by calling a series of penalties, in rapid succession, against the other club.

When the total amount got to a certain point, the official then tucked his whistle away altogether and assumed that he'd done a fair and impartial job on the game. Meanwhile, things got out of hand on the ice and injuries resulted.

At this point in the playoffs, the two remaining teams are the best the league has to offer and both clubs got this far with talent and hard work. Each team expects to get even further up the ladder by utilizing the same tools in this series. They both have enough talent to adjust to having to cope with both the largest and smallest ice surfaces in the league, in the same series. Each team has seen the other play just twice, with the exception of some last minute scouting by Gare and his staff. It will be tough enough to deal with each other without having to deal with inconsistent and bad officiating.

I might also note that in six playoff seasons covering the BCJHL, I had never found it necessary to chastize the league officiating. But times have changed for everyone. The league is better than it used to be and it will continue to improve in the coming years.

Let's just hope the officiating can keep pace with the improvements.