Coaches have impressive records

Scouts flock to final series

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

For the first time in 16 years, Vernon is playing in the B.C. Junior Hockey League championship series.

The Vernon Lakers host the Richmond Sockeyes in the opening game of the best-of-seven series, Saturday, at 8 p.m. The second game is also scheduled in Vernon on Sunday, at 7 p.m.

The last time a Vernon team competed in the league final was in 1972 when the Essos defeated the Penticton Broncos. The Essos then lost to the Red Deer Rustlers in the Centennial Cup interprovincial playdowns.

The series has generated a tremendous amount of interest and sellout crowds are expected for both weekend games. Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis said the series is also being followed, closely, in other parts of North America.

"I think over half the National Hockey League teams will be represented at Saturday's game," Lis said. "In the past two days I've received calls from Detroit, Buffalo, and the Islanders."

In addition to the pro scouts, a small army of college coaches and scouts will be in the stands.

"We're getting calls from (U.S.) schools every day," Lis said. "I had a phone call Thursday morning from a New York school (Plattsburgh State). But, there isn't much left for the colleges to choose from."



CHAD BIAFORE PHIL SOUKOROFF

Seven Vernon players have accepted scholarships to American universities and another six are negotiating with U.S. schools.

"Most of our guys are already committed," Lis said. "And a lot of the Richmond players aren't eligible. So, I don't really know who the colleges can go after."

Eight Sockeyes are ineligible for U.S. college scholarships because they previously played at the tier one level, which is classed as semi-professional by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

The Vernon players who have accepted scholarships, or are negotiating with universities, are:

Player	University
Mike Barkley	Maine
Dane Jackson	North Dakota
Dallas Drake	Northern Michigan
Chad Biafore	Chicago at Illinois
Mark Greyeyes	Alaska-Anchorage
Phil Soukoroff	Northern Michigan
Adrian Markin	Alaska-Anchorage (negotiating)
Greg Parnell	Michigan Tech (negotiating)
Ian Alger	Plattsburgh State (negotiating)
Mike Paller	Plattsburgh State (negotiating)
Wes Elliott	Plattsburgh State (negotiating)
Glen Fry	North Dakota (negotiating)

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

The team with the greatest ability to adapt to their environment will likely triumph as the defending Centennial Cup champion Richmond Sockeyes meet the Vernon Lakers for the B.C. Junior Hockey League title.



ORLAND KURTENBACH

The Lakers play on the league's smallest ice-surface while the Sockeyes play their home games on the largest ice-surface in the BCJHL. However, since both teams play well on a large surface, Vernon holds an advantage over their Richmond counterparts since they also have the home-ice advantage.

Nevertheless, if the Sockeyes can quickly adjust to life on a smaller pond it could make things extremely interesting and account for what is shaping up to be the best league final in recent memory — perhaps in league history.

What it all may boil down to is a coaching duel and if this is the case the edge is slightly in favor of the Sockeyes.

Under Head Coach Orland Kurtenback, the Sockeyes won the national Junior A hockey title a year ago, compiling one of the most impressive playoff records of any junior A hockey club ever. The Richmond club defeated all their BCJHL opposition in straight games, before sweeping the Peace-Cariboo champs in two straight games. Against Alberta, they went seven games to defeat the Red Deer Rustlers, swept past the Saskatchewan champs in five games, then went undefeated in Centennial Cup round-robin action before winning the championship tilt.

Kurtenbach is no stranger to coaching, having performed stints in the NHL and the American Hockey League.

On the other hand, the name of Head Coach Ernie Gare's game is consistency. In two full seasons as mentor of the Vernon Lakers, he has amassed an impressive 75-27-2 won-loss record during regular season play and to date has accumulated a 14-4 playoff record. The longest losing streak the local club suffered during the regular season campaign this year was one game.

Meanwhile, the Lakers have been impressive in playoff round action this season, with eight consecutive wins.

The Vernon club also swept the Sockeyes in a pair of regular season dates including an impressive 7-3 victory against the Sockeyes inside the cavernous interior of the Richmond Arena, back in January. In addition, the Lakers won the BCJHL overall with their 42-10 record. This fact gives the Vernon club the home-ice advantage in this championship series, which will be a best-of-seven affair.

With all their forwards healthy, the Lakers hold a decisive scoring edge over the Sockeyes as they did against every other team in the league this season. Overall they were marginally better defensively as well and in eight playoff games to date they have allowed just 27 goals against which gives them an average of slightly more than three goals per game.

Statistics and coaching aside, the series will more likely be determined by the team which shows the most desire, discipline and determination.

Games one and two will take place Saturday and Sunday nights at the Vernon Civic Arena, with the next two games to follow in Richmond.

Tickets available for weekend games

Advance tickets for the first two games in the B.C. Junior Hockey League championship series will be available Saturday, from 11 a.m. to game time, at the Vernon Civic Arena box office.

The series schedule is:

March 19: Richmond at Vernon, 8 p.m.

March 20: Richmond at Vernon, 7 p.m.

March 22: Vernon at Richmond, 8 p.m.

March 23: Vernon at Richmond, 8 p.m.

March 26: Richmond at Vernon, 8 p.m. (if necessary)

March 30: Vernon at Richmond, 8 p.m. (if necessary).

April 2: Richmond at Vernon, 8 p.m. (if necessary).



Detroit signs Holland

PORTLAND (Special) — Vernon native Dennis Holland has signed a National Hockey League contract with the Detroit Red Wings.

Holland was selected by the Red Wings in the third round of the 1987 amateur draft.



DENNIS HOLLAND

The slick centre is in his second year with the Portland Winter Hawks, of the Western Hockey League.

Portland General Manager Brian Shaw acted as Holland's agent and said the Red Wings made a generous offer. "I'm ecstatic with the deal," Shaw

Vernon Daily News | **sports** Editor—DON KENDALL