SERIES STARTS FRIDAY

North Stars host Lakers

The Vernon Lakers will tangle with the Grande Prairie North Stars in the provincial junior 'A' hockey championship series, this weekend, in Grande Prairie.

The North Stars captured the Peace Cariboo Junior Hockey League championship by edging the Prince George Spruce Kings 4-3, Tuesday night.

Grande Prairie won the best-of-seven series 4-3 after trailing 3-1.

The best-of-three Mowat Cup series gets under way Friday night. The second game is scheduled Saturday, with the third game Sunday, if necessary.

The Lakers left earlier today on their 17-hour bus trip to Grande Prairie.

Vernon has not played since March 26 when it defeated the Richmond Sockeyes in the fifth game, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League final series. And according to Lakers' General Manager Mel Lis, his players can't wait to get on to the ice.

"It didn't matter to us who we played . . . we just want to play hockey," Lis said.

"As far as travel goes, Prince George is a lot closer. But, in the long run, it might be to our advantage to be going to Grande Prairie."

The winner of the Vernon-Grande Prairie confrontation has only two days to travel to either St. Albert (near Edmonton) or Calgary for the opening game in the Centennial Cup int interprovincial playdowns.

"If we beat Grande Prairie, then we'll go straight on to St. Albert or Calgary," Lis said.

The Calgary Canucks currently lead the best-of-seven Alberta series 3-1.

The Vernon GM isn't concerned about his club being flat, after a two-week break, or tired, after a 17-hour bus trip.

"We'll be ready to go," Lis said. "If you can't get excited about the B.C. finals, what can you get excited about?"

The Long layoff has allowed Vernon's bumps and bruises to heal. Trevor Pohl (shoulder), Mike Barkley (shoulder) and Dallas Drake (knee) are in better shape after playing injured against Richmond. And defenceman Greg Olson, who suffered a separated shoulder in the Interior Division final series against the Penticton Knights, may play this weekend.

"Olson is making the trip and he may see some action," Lis said.

The games will be broadcast live on CJIB radio.