

Lakers play

The Vernon Lakers hope to come back tonight with a win against the Calgary Canucks. The Alberta team leads a best of seven series two games to none. Playing in front of a home-town crowd could give the Lakers an edge as they play tonight at 8 p.m. For more on the game, turn to page 13.

Lakers look for first victory after losing back-to-back games

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home as far as the Vernon Lakers are concerned.

The Lakers will try for their first win tonight when they host the Calgary Canucks in game three of the best-of-seven Western Canada Junior A semi-final. Game time is 8 p.m. at the Vernon Civic Arena.

Calgary defeated the Lakers twice in their own barn earlier this week in the Olympic City, earning victories of 7-3 and 7-4 against the hometown squad. The second game was decided in overtime.

Regardless of their showing in the first two games, Vernon Head Coach Ernie Gare is adamant that his club can ground the high-flying Canucks who have great speed and depth in their lineup. The Canucks are 14-2 coming into tonight's game while Vernon, B.C. Junior Hockey League champions, are now 14-3 in the playoff season.

"If we do the things that got us here we should beat them," explained Gare. "We have to get an early lead and see how they play when they're behind."

The Lakers have never led so far in the series as the Canucks have scored the first goal in both games and Vernon has been forced to play catchup hockey.

Gare will have to go with a makeshift first line tonight as left-winger Mark Greyeyes won't be dressed. Greyeyes injured his knee in game two of the series Wednesday night in Calgary. His status is unknown for the duration.

In his place, Gare plans to move defenceman Adrian Markin up to the wing beside Dallas Drake and Mike Barkley. The last time Markin played on a wing with Drake he responded with two goals and three assists in game three against the Penticton Knights. Gare is hoping that the speedy blueliner can offer the same scoring touch around the net tonight.

The Lakers didn't get the kind of offensive production from their big guns that they needed in the first two games, especially not from Barkley and Jamie Steer. Both players were 50-plus goal-scorers in regular season but failed to score in the first two games in Calgary.

"They didn't play that well in Calgary but they'll turn it around here," said Gare confidently.

Meanwhile, another observer of the games in Calgary, sportswriter Greg Meacham of the Red Deer Advocate, thinks that Vernon will prevail in this series. Meacham has covered the AJHL for the past eight years and knows the Canucks' strengths and weaknesses this year as well.

"If they (Lakers) stay out of the penalty box they'll beat them even if they are down two games," said Meacham who watched the Canucks defeat the defending AJHL champion Red Deer Rustlers in four games last month.

"You can't take penalties against the Canucks or they'll kill you," he added.

The Lakers once preferred the larger ice surfaces but after being outskated by Calgary on the huge ice-surface at the Max Bell Arena, the local club now feels they will have more of an advantage at the Civic Arena.

Game time Sunday night is 7 p.m.

