Lakers assistant coach bench boss in New West

A Vernon man is the new head coach of the newest franchise of the B.C. Junior Hockey League.

Ed Johnstone, a man who played 14 years in the National Hockey League, nine with the New York Rangers and the last four in the Detroit Red Wings organization, accepted the coaching job Wednesday with the New Westminster Royals.

"It was something I felt I had to do if I was going to continue as a coach," said Johnstone. "I had a few resumes sent out and they (New Westminster) contacted me. My objective is to work hard and put a good product on the ice. We have good owners and I'm looking forward to the challenge. This is my first head coaching job."

Johnstone had been a press-box advisor and assistant coach the past two seasons with the Vernon Lakers.



E.J. (his nickname) says he isn't sure what style of play his Royals will implement this season because he is totally unfamiliar with his players, 19 of whom are returnees.

"You coach the players you get," he says. "If you get guys who can really skate then you play that style. If you get up and down type of grinders you don't try and play a skating game. All I know is that we have 19 returnees and as far as I'm concerned everybody in camp has an honest opportunity to make our team. I plan on letting the players do what they do best."



ED JOHNSTONE

Negotiations took only five days to finalize the deal between principal owner Bruce Taylor and Johnstone. Johnstone says he kept Vernon Lakers owner Mel Lis fully abreast of his head coaching aspirations and leaves with Lis' blessing. But he says he will miss Vernon.

"Sure I'll miss Vernon, it's home," said E.J. "I plan on moving my family down to the Coast and devote all my time and energies into making the Royals a competitive team.