Louis Melanson, Jean Erickson, and Hassette's favour.

Vernon youngster will attend camp

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports Editor

He's a determined young man.

Vernon minor hockey product Ryan Loxam, 16, is determined to become only the second local player to make the Pacific Region Under-17 team. The team, which opens camp Sunday in Osoyoss, is the second stage of the Esso "Best Ever" Program which began with the B.C. Cup competition for the province's top 16-year olds last spring.



RYAN LOXAM

Loxam is among a field of 46 hopefuls attending the training camp. Like Loxam, 15 others are defencemen which means that there will be a tremendous amount of competition for the positions available.

To make matters worse, only half of the Pacific Region team will be selected from amongst the 46 pucksters in the Osoyoos camp. The other half of the regional under-17 squad will come from a similar camp being held in Alberta.

Still, Loxam is heading into the confrontation with a positive frame of mind and a good attitude not to mention his dogged determination to succeed where many have failed before him.

"It's going to be hard but it'll be a challenge," he explained. "I'd like to be the second player from Vernon to make the team."

The first, of course, was Dennis Holland who had been a standout with the Vernon Midget reps before attending the camp that year.

Holland went on to star with the Vernon Lakers and then the Portland Winter Hawks. He was drafted by the Detroit Red Wings in the 1987 June amateur player draft.

In other years the program involved an additional round of playoffs which saw a team from B.C. play off against an Alberta team from which the Pacific Regional squad was eventually chosen. That stage has been bypassed this year and that has made the camp that much harder for everyone concerned.

"What they've done is divide the camp into two teams," he explained. "Every guy goes all the way through the camp and the selections are made at the end of the camp.

"Alberta does the same and the team is made up of the best players chosen," he continued. "They've eliminated the B.C.-Alberta playoff round this year."

The team will then compete in a tournament in Calgary late next month. That tournament will feature four other teams from various regions across the country.

In spite of the odds, Loxam is confident in his ability and doesn't plan to do anything other than what he does best.

"I guess my positional play is my best asset but I have to work hard and keep my head up and make sure I don't make any mistakes along the way," he said.

Meanwhile, whether or not he makes the Pacific Region team will have little or no effect on his plans for the rest of this season according to his own admission.

"This fall I plan to stay in Vernon and play midget rep hockey," he said. "I don't want to play junior hockey too soon but I'll still go to the Vernon Lakers' camp."