No grass is growing under Mel Lis' feet

No grass grows beneath the feet of Mel Lis.

With the B.C. Junior Hockey League season still almost a month off, Lis has already been busy making deals to piece together the jigsaw puzzle that will become his hockey club in the new season.



MEL LIS

And, while the BCJHL season is still some distance away, the Lakers' rookie training camp is scheduled to open one week from today on Aug. 30. Lis expects as many as 80 young players to be out for that event.

Meanwhile, the club's main camp will open on Sept. 6 with 30-35 quality players expected to be looking for a spot on the roster by that time.

In the meantime, Lis has had a phone growing out of his ear as he wheels and deals, talking to players as far away as Ontario. However, unlike last year, Lis has been less conspicuous about his transactions this summer.

"I've been laying in the weeds for a number of reasons," said the Lakers' President and General Manager. "I want to get these guys signed before I say anything but I'll have something significant to report in a few days."

Last season Lis' team went all the way to the Pacific Region final before bowing out to the Calgary Canucks in four games. Although the local squad was considered a powerhouse by most standards, their loss at that level of play has led Lis to believe a better defensive game is necessary.

"If we get a team as good as last year we'll be fine but I think we're going to concentrate more on defensive play," Lis explained. "We'll still have the horses to put the puck in the net though."

Among the players Lis will go on record with at this point is a star rearguard by the name of Paul Saganello. The Lantzvil, B.C. native toiled for the University of Alaska last season (NCAA) but is going to play a year of junior hockey in order to change NCAA school next season. According to Lis Saganello, 6', 210 lbs., is a stay-at-home style of defenceman.

"We've always needed a good defensive defenceman," said Lis.

Lis also has a line on a rushing defenceman from Ontario which will help to balance the club with offensive and defensive rearguards.

"People might say why is Mel Lis going to Ontario but would you believe a college recommended to this guy that he leave Ontario and come to Vernon to play?" he said.

Up front, Lis expects a Junior B prodigy to carry much of the scoring punch for the club. Bill Lindsay, 17, scored 60 goals last season for the last place Elk Valley Blazers of the Kootenay International Junior "B" Hockey League as a 16-year-old.

"I've had more schools phone me already about that guy," said Lis. "Some of them want to fly him down there already."

However, Lis isn't as interested in stocking NCAA schools next year as much as he's interested in building a team for the 1989-90 season when the Lakers will host the Centennial Cup — emblematic of Junior "A" hockey supremacy in Canada.

"We're going to ask our young stars to commit themselves for two years so we have a good team for the Centennial Cup," he explained.

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