Lakers open rookie training camp

By AL PATERSON
Daily News Sports

If the first day is any indication, the Vernon Lakers Hockey Club should be a good one this season.

About 70 players showed up for the rookie camp that opened Tuesday at the Priest Valley Arena and some of them caught the eye of Vernon owner Mel Lis.

"There's some pretty good talent out there, don't you think," said Lis. "It's only the first day and it's hard to tell yet but there is a lot of talent out there. We'll probably take maybe 15 players to our main camp."

Main camp begins next Tuesday. Those hoping to make it to the big club this season include players from as far away as Nova Scotia and St. Paul Minnesota.

There is an unusually heavy emphasis among rookies on the American side.

"Yes, there are a lot of Americans here, but no we didn't plan it that way," said Lis. "It just worked out that way. More kids are on the way, they should be in camp today."

Other players from South of the border bidding to become Lakers for the 1988-89 season include players from Alaska, Portland, Oregon, and Spokane.

Lis is busier than a one-armed paperhanger this week. "You wouldn't want to follow me around today," he joked. "The phone must have rung a hundred times. But that's the way it is and I'm happy with what I've seen so far."

The Lakers open the pre-season with a home-and-home series against the Kelowna Packers.

Sept. 9 sees the Lakers in the Rutland Arena for an exhibition tilt with Kelowna. The same two teams go at it Sept. 10 at Vernon's Civic Arena.

Then, on Sept. 11, the Lakers play their third game in as many nights when they play Salmon Arm Blazer in Enderby.

The regular season begins for the Lakers.

Vernon also has a pair of exhibition games slated with the Portland Winter Hawks of the Western Hockey League. Vernon plays Portland in Osoyoos Sept. 15 and the rematch is set for Vernon Sept. 17.

The Lakers begin a 60-game regular season at home to Merritt Sept. 23.

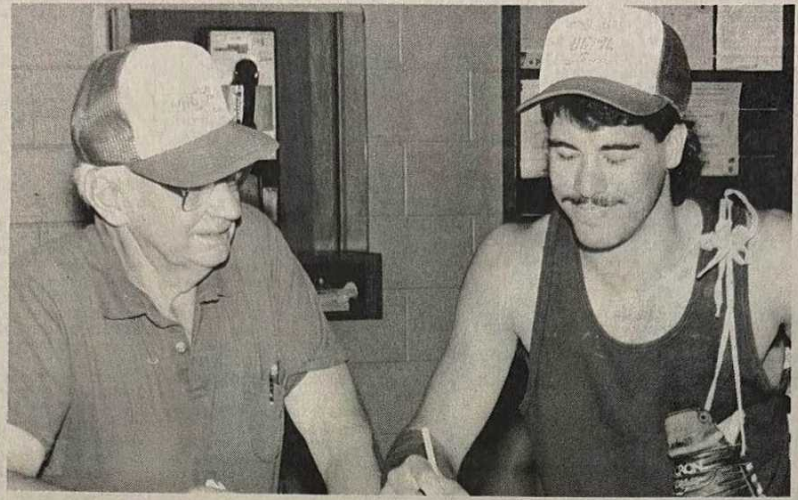
"Like I say, it's only the first day so you can't tell very much," said Lis, "but it's fair to say that so far everything is going according to plan."

Lis, in reacting to a story in Monday's issue of the Vernon Daily News, said the recent BCJHL ruling limiting the number of Western Hockey League 20 year olds allowed this season in the BCJHL won't likely have any affect locally.

BCJHL president Bruce Allison said the league decided that only three WHLers per team will be allowed.

Allison said the league this year voted to have only three 20-year old WHLers per team. Lis said he wasn't at that meeting when the rule was passed but said he is prepared to go along with the majority of teams which voted in favor of the proposal.

"I can't see it affecting us," said Lis. "But you never want to say never because you just don't know. Hopefully, we have done our homework well enough so we don't need to bring in a bunch of guys towards the latter part of the season."



VERN DYE welomes a new additon to the BCJHL—Randy McGrew of Minnesota.