Lakers start pre-season with victory over Packers

It appears the Vernon Lakers have done their homework well.

The Lakers opened the 1988-89 BCJHL pre-season Friday night with a 7-4 victory over Kelowna Packers in Kelowna. The same two teams meet in a rematch tonight at 8 p.m. at Vernon Civic Arena.

The Lakers dressed only one of last year's BC Junior Hockey League champion squad, Greg Olson. The star of the show, however, was rookie Tony Szabo. A relatively small player, Szabo proved he could play with the big boys by scoring a hat trick.

Jason Marshall staked Vernon to a 1-0 lead by drilling a low point shot into the net for the lone goal of the first period.

Szabo scored twice in the middle period, both goals unassisted, while Kelowna's only goal of the period came from Rick Dundas.

Jarrett Watts clicked for Kelowna nearly four minutes into the final period but Szabo's 35-foot snapshot gave Vernon control of the contest the rest of the way.

Jeff Adams scored twice for Vernon in the final period, once after a nifty deke and shot through the five-hole, and the other coming when he deflected a point shot by Mark Smigelsky.

Todd Patz fashioned the other goal for Kelowna while Olson's goal into an empty net with 20 seconds left to play completed the scoring.

Szabo, Watts and Adams were named the first, second, and third stars, respectively.

It marked the fourth time in two years George Fargher has gone behind the Vernon bench and won while giving Laker Head Coach Ernie Gare a chance to look at the on-ice happenings from the stands. Fargher is undefeated behind the bench.

"I was happy overall," said Fargher, an assistant coach. "I thought our forwards played well, took the body in their own end. I thought Tony Szabo was our best player tonight. He sure showed us he can put the puck into the net."

Local fans can expect an almost complete change of players tonight as Gare and Fargher look at another approximately 20 players trying to crack what is shaping up to be an impressive lineup.