Last year's Lakers look good in Portland

Two, possibly three, players who suited up last season with the Vernon Lakers are expected to wear the colors of the Portland Winter Hawks this season.

Wayne Meier, Director of Player Personnel with Portland, says Mark Greyeyes and Chad Biafore, both 20 year olds, have made the Western Hockey League club this season while Wes Elliott is still a maybe.

"Greyeyes is playing extremely well," said Meier. "We have him on a line with James Black and Grey Leahy, both veterans, and they have clicked very well together. And Chad, he's our best defenceman in terms of handling the puck. He is a very intelligent player who reads the play well and jumps into the holes real well."

One thing not in Elliott's favor is his age. "Wes is a 20 year old and coaches like to see their 20 year olds dominate play. So far, at least in controlled scrimmages, Wes hasn't done that," said Meier. "We're hoping that, once our exhibition games start, we'll see him come to the fore. That's what he has to do, come to the fore, if he is to make our team this year. He's a big, strong defenceman and we certainly haven't given up on Elliot."

The exhibition series that Meier talked about begins in Osoyoos tonight as the Winter Hawks take on the Vernon Lakers in a 7:30 p.m. game. Friday night the Portland squad makes the trek to Clearwater to meet the Kamloops Blazers. Saturday night Portland plays Vernon in a rematch at Civic Arena in a game set for an 8 p.m. start.

Meier says the Winter Hawks strength this season will be among the forwards and also in goal.

"In goal we have Byron Dafoe, a 17 year old," said Meier. "He was an all-star in the B.C. Junior Hockey League last year as a 16 year old. He has been very impressive so far in camp and we are looking for big things from him this year."

The Winter Hawks have 26 players still in camp.

"I think we have an excellent group of forwards," said Meier. "That will be probably our main strength this year."

Two Vernon players are expected to shoulder much of the offensive load this winter for Portland but neither one of them will play in either exhibition game against the Lakers this week.

"Dennis Holland is still in Detroit's main camp and we don't know when we are going to get him back," said Meier. "I don't think it will be in time for this weekend. And Troy Mick's knee needs a couple of weeks of further rehabilitation. He went to Pittsburgh's camp. They t ested him and found the knee to be only 80 per cent so they sent him home. He didn't work hard enough on the knee this summer so he needs a couple of weeks to make it 100 per cent. He's going to stay in Portland this trip. There is no sense taking a risk. Troy Mick is a very important part of our hockey club."

Oldtimers' tournament

The Ancient Mariners are coming to Vernon.

The oldtimers hockey team known as the Ancient Mariners, that is. The Mariners are one of two Vancouver teams expected to compete this weekend in the 7th annual Pecan Pie Oldtimers Hockey Tournament, a three-day event that goes Friday to Sunday at the Civic Arena. The other coastal team is the Vancouver Canadians.

Those two teams will be joined by the Osoyoos Nighthawks, Salmon Arm Cavaliers, Winfield Gophers, Westside Grizzlies, Armstrong Oldtimers, Vernon Moonshiners, Lotus Gardens and one other team.

A highlight of Friday's play is expected to be the tournament opener when the host team, Pecan Pie, tangles with Armstrong.

The tournament winds up Sunday with the "C" final at 1 p.m., the "B" final set for 2:30 p.m. and the "A" final slated for about 4 p.m.

THE VIEW FROM HERE . . .

The Lakers are looking pretty good



by
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Daily News
Sports

The Vernon Lakers appear to be the team to beat.

Mind you, I haven't seen the Penticton Knights or the Merritt Centennials yet but the Lakers appear to have the horses to repeat as B.C. Junior Hockey League champions. I watched the local squad play three games in three nights on the weekend and they showed me plenty of promise.

I told Head Coach Ernie Gare I didn't envy him having to make the cuts because he has some very tough decisions facing him. I'll leave those decisions to him. But there are a few real finds that I noticed over the weekend. One of them is Curtis Head.

Here's a 17-year old who can do it all. Plus, he's a defenceman and those are the hardest guys to find. Head scored a couple of key goals, including the winner, Sunday night against Salmon Arm and took the body all night. He also proved he is pretty tough and can handle himself when he went toe-to-toe with Kelowna's Trent Loch Saturday night.

Head won the fight that lasted about two minutes but also proved he could take it as Loch unloaded, and landed, a few haymakers of his own.

Dean Zayonce is another kid who caught my eye. He controlled play while patrolling the Vernon blueline and he'll win a lot more fights than he loses.

Tony Szabo, a 20-year old from Rochester, New York, is another dandy newcomer for Vernon. He scored a hat trick the other night against Kelowna and two of those markers were on the backhand. What I like about him is his excellent anticipation and work ethic — he's a buzz-saw out there every shift.

Szabo is a little on the smallish side but he has the skills to make up for it. Also on the small side, but also adept offensively is Rob Shypitski.

Salmon Arm looks considerably stronger than last season and gave the Lakers all they could handle Sunday night. Sunday's game reminded me of a regular season, maybe even playoff game, in terms of intensity. Salmon Arm has a couple of good ones in Joe Snyder and Terry Klapstein and I look for the Tigers to give Vernon a lot of good tussles this winter.

Kelowna stunk the joint out Saturday night. The Packers were beaten in every aspect of the game. Kelowna better go out and find some hockey players in a hurry or it will be a long winter. The Vernon cuts will very possibly be better than what Kelowna has now.

To make matters worse, look at the Kelowna kids in Vernon's camp. Mark Shmigelsky is a rugged rearguard, ditto for Dean Zayonce. Scott Bailey would probably be no worse than the second-string goalie in Kelowna, maybe even first string. Those three guys would make Kelowna about 20 per cent stronger as soon as they stepped on the ice.

It's still early in the season so a lot of things could change before the shooting stops. Western Hockey League teams haven't made their final cuts yet so teams can strengthen themselves considerably when the WHL teams get down to the nitty-gritty.

I haven't seen Penticton yet but I hear they have a big club and I know Head Coach Chuck Tapp is an excellent motivator.

Merritt is another question mark because I haven't heard much about them and I haven't seen them, either. Paul Kruse is still in the Kamloops Blazers' camp and I expect he'll make it because he is big, strong and tough with a reasonable touch around the net.

The other big gun for Merritt last year was Cal McGowan. I haven't heard if he's back or not. If not, the Centennials have their work cut out for them.

But not as much as the Lakers had to do this season. Only four Lakers, Duane Dennis, Shawn Hendry, Adrian Markin and Greg Olson are back from last year.

And Olson has not had a brilliant training camp thus far. He'd better get the lead out and start moving or he may not make the Lakers this year.

Anytime you have to find 16 hockey players it's tough. Laker management deserves a lot of credit for coming up with the outstanding prospects they have in camp.

It's no disgrace not to make this club. A lot of cuts from the Lakers could be stars on other clubs.