

Big win

Vernon Lakers forward Corey Carlson tallied four assists last night to help the Lakers to a big 11-4 win over the Merritt Centennials. Details of the game are on page 11. Tonight, Vernon plays Richmond Sockeyes at the Civic Arena with the game getting under way at 8 p.m. Vernon defeated Richmond last season to win the B.C. Junior Hockey League championship.



Speedy Lakers easily crush visiting Merritt Centennials

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports Editor

Speed kills — so the Merritt Centennials found out.

The Vernon Lakers used their excellent speed, coupled with relentless forechecking, to hammer the visiting Centennials 11-4 Friday night in B.C. Junior Hockey League action at the Civic Arena.

The victory leaves Vernon with a record of three wins and one loss and alone in first place in the BCJHL Interior Division.

"We are a better skating team and it's a different kind of team than we had last year," explained Vernon Head Coach Ernie Gare in comparing his charges to his slow-starting BCJHL champs last season.

Although the Lakers held the upper hand in the speed department it took them three quarters of the first period to finally break out of a scoreless deadlock against the cautious but underpowered Merritt squad. However, it took some excellent goaltending on the part of Brian Langlot to keep the visitors off the scoreboard until the local team could finally break the ice.

"We had a lot of good quality shots so it was only a matter of time before we wore them down," explained Gare. "It could have been 2-0 early for Merritt but Brian (Langlot) stood his ground and kept them out of it."

It was a night for local skaters to shine too as sophomore workhorse Duane Dennis paced the club with a three-goal effort — his first of his junior career.

"I had a lot of chances last year and a lot of two-goal games but this was my first hat-trick," said Dennis. "The guys are coming together a little faster and just about all the guys are going to be here for the season which helps a lot.

"We've also got good goaltending already so that helps," he added.

Gare was full of praise for Dennis — a player who gives 100 percent on the ice at all times.

"ilHe (Dennis) always works hard and it's nice to see things pay off for a guy who works hat hard," said Gare.

Newcomer Jim Anderson, a local minor hockey product, scored a pair of goals and added an assist.

After a slow start the goals started to come rapidly in the dying minutes of the first period. Vernon took a 3-0 lead to the dressing room on goals by Dave Oliver, his first of two, Rob Atkinson, also with a pair on the right, and Dennis.

Oliver, Atkinson and Anderson stretched the lead to 6-0 early in the second frame with Anderson's tally at 3:53 coming on a power-play situation.

The Lakers momentarily dropped their guard after their sixth goal and the visitors took advantage of the situation to score three quick goals.

Paul Gentes notched a pair and Chris Forsberg added one as Merritt capitalized on two power-plays and a defensive lapse by Vernon.

The Lakers re-established their cominance quickly after Merritt's third goal, closing the frame with goals by speedy centre Tony Szabo and Anderson's second of the night to lead 8-3 after 40 minutes.

Dennis added a pair in the third frame while Adrian Markin, a stellar defenceman all night for Vernon, finished off an end-to-end rush with a pretty play to score as well.

Bill Birks added a late goal for the Centennials.

Langlot was called on to make 25 saves on the night while the Lakers kept Lauren Belland busy at the other end. Belland made 47 saves.

The Lakers have no time to savor their lopsided victory as the Richmond Sockeyes are in town tonight for a rematch of their BCJHL final series last spring.

The Sockeyes were 6-4 losers to the Kelowna Packers in other BCJHL action Friday night while other games saw Penticton edge Salmon Arm 3-1. On the Coast the Chilliwack Eagles downed the Cowichan Valley Whalers 8-5 while The New Westminster Royals battled to a 7-7 draw with the Nanaimo Clippers.

In Kelowna the Sockeyes went ahead 2-0 early in the game but the Packers battled back with four unanswered second period goals.

In Penticton Brad Smith scored twice for the Knights while Todd Jones was outstanding in net blocking 35 shots to give his team the win.



ADRIAN MARKIN, above, rubs out his man along the boards while Vernon native Jim Anderson, at left, controls the puck in the offensive zone during an easy 11-4 victory by the Vernon Lakers over visiting Merritt Centennials Friday night at the Civic Arena. (Daily News Photos)

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SPORTS BRIEFS

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