

COREY CARLSON set up Tony Szabo for the game-winning goal in overtime Saturday night against visiting Richmond. He scored the game-winner Sunday in Kelowna. (Daily News Photo)

Bad game plan . . . good results

By JIM JUDD
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The game plan may be brutal but the results are great.

The Vernon Lakers came back from three-goal deficits twice on the weekend, winning 4-3 in Kelowna Sunday afternoon and scratching out a 7-6 overtime victory Saturday night against the visiting Richmond Sockeyes.

The successful weekend gives the local Junior "A" club a modest five-game win streak and extends their lead in the B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division.

A handful of names frequented the scoring sheet on the weekend but chief among these was the club's star centre Tony Szabo.

Saturday night Szabo scored the final three goals of the game, including the winner in overtime, to single-handedly win the game. He also added a third-period assist on a goal by Rob Atkinson.

Veteran Duane Dennis, local rookie Jim Anderson and centre Corey Carlson also made names for themselves. However, Szabo appears to be the early favorite to become the latest BCJHL scoring champ.

"We were just telling the guys after the second period that you gotta believe it," Szabo said referring to Saturday's come-from-behind win over the Sockeyes. "It was a character test and we came through."

"I told the kids when we were down by three goals to work hard and win the last 12 minutes of the game," explained Gare on Saturday night. "I told them just to win the last 12 minutes and we'd let the chips fall where they may.

"After you score 11 goals in the previous game everybody wants to score and we started getting sloppy right off the bat," he added.

Brian Langlot backstopped the Lakers to another win Saturday, making 36 saves while Richmond's Kevin Baldridge made 35 saves on the night.

Anderson, Dennis and Doug Lawrence also had goals for Vernon Saturday while Jason Jennings, with two, Wayne Stripp, Rob Horvath, Mark Kaufman and Jason Talo had singles.

Richmond held period leads of 3-1 and 5-3 and led 6-3 in the third period at one point. The Sockeyes enjoyed a 6-4 lead and a power-play situation when Szabo started the comeback with a short-handed goal. He finished the game with a pair of power-play goals including the winner at 1:25 of overtime.

Sunday the Packers jumped out to a 3-0 lead but they only enjoyed the situation for a brief time before the Lakers closed the door. The club closed the first stanza with a pair of goals and added two unanswered tallies in the second period for the win. There was no scoring in the third frame.

"We've got to solve this problem of coming out flat off the start," explained Gare on Sunday.

Szabo got the ball rolling in the first period with the first goal while Dennis followed suit, Anderson scored his fourth in the past three games, and Carlson added the game winner late in the second frame.

Scott Hargreaves, Jason Zilkie and Trent Loch replied for the Packers who ran into a brick wall in the last two periods.

"We really shut them down," said Gare. "They had only four shots in the second period and just two shots in the third."

Vernon outshot Kelowna by a 34-18 margin in all.

Meanwhile, Gare is not only happy with the club's record to date but somewhat relieved as well.

"We're happy to be in this position," he said. "I thought we'd struggle a bit at first until things came together."

The Lakers have a chance to avenge their only loss so far this season when they entertain the Salmon Arm Tigers Tuesday night. The Tigers scored an overtime win against the Lakers in the season opener but Vernon hasn't lost since then.

In other BCJHL action Sunday Richmond defeated Penticton 5-2 while the New Westminster Royals defeated the Powell River Paper Kings 4-3 in overtime.

Soviets remain number one with awesome show in Seoul