VERNON NEWS

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Blades, Buckaroos Stage Fistic Ice Revue

The high point (or low point if you wish) of Tuesday night's junior hockey game between Vernon Blades and Kelowna Buckaroos was this free-for-all that broke out midway through the third period in front of the Vernon goal. In the main bout (left) Vernon's hotheaded defenceman Gordie Nuyens spars with the Bucks' Wayne Horning while referee Art Davison grunts and groans to break their clinch. Appearing to protect Nuyens from any interference is defensive mate Jim Stephen (center) who confronts Ken Kitsch (No. 5) and Ron Lakes (No. 4). Interested spectators include Blade netminder Gary Holland (left), Terry Kasubuchi (No. 15), referee-assistant Alex Kashuba and Corky Agar (far right). Kelowna won the game 9-2.

—Vernon News Photo

Bucks Still Best, Stop Blues Again

Wobbly Vernon Squad Fails To Halt Scoring Blitz

KELOWNA 9, VERNON 2

Vernon Blades beat a heavy tattoo on the Buckaroos' door Tuesday night but forgot to bolt their own gate securely.

The result was the powerful Kelowna juniors paid return visits with devastating ease, pouring pucks past a sloppy defence and a shaky goaltender for a 9-2 decision.

Their lopsided win pushed them two points in front of the Kamloops Rockets in the Okanagan Junior Hockey League standings, at least until Friday when their closest rivals play the weak Penticton Junior Vees.

Despite some avowed bright moments, Vernon's ninth loss to the Buckaroos was a dark, dreary return to its form of a month and a half ago.

In the first period the Blades appeared to forget all the hard lessons they had learned through trial and error — and mostly through error. Though outshooting Kelowna 8-6 they skated off the ice after 20 minutes wallowing beneath a 5-0 deficit from which they never recovered.

They played better hockey in the second period, in fact unbeatable hockey, but they could only get one goal at the expense of Buckaroo netminder Sid Shussel who came up with one of his best efforts to date.

In the final session a reversion to first period form took place as Kelowna found the range for four more goals to Vernon's one. The Blades outshot the Buckaroos 33-22.

Admittedly the Blue's newest goaltender, Gary Holland, had a bad night—an uncommon occurrence as he has proved on a number of occasions before.

The defence, though tenacious and hardknocking, left numerous holes which were filled at the wrong times by fast skating opportunists like winger Fred Thomas who scored four goals and assisted twice.

Some of the offensive punch, so evident in the Blades' last few games was also missing. Passes were'nt always clicking, skating was sluggish, and shooting sometimes inaccurate or untimely.

In brief, they seemed to be caught off balance, fresh after playing two magnificent games with Kamloops and a walk-away with Penticton.

The Blades had their share of stars though. Buck Sherk, gutty forward and skillful playmaker, scored one of their two goals, his fourth in consecutive games played. Ralph Litzenberger, despite his size, crashed his way past Kelowna defenders all night and assisted on Sherk's goal.

Dave MacKay also had a fine night, notching the other goal unassisted and playing policeman capably.

Pacing Thomas' four-goal flurry for Kelowna was scoring leader Bob Gruber who added two more to his total. Other Buck marksmen were Terry Kasubuchi, Wayne Horning, and Phil Larden.

The game went according to Hoyle, penalty-wise. After two very quiet periods bedlam broke out in the final 20 minutes, referee-in-charge Art Davison issuing 12 major and minor penalties, including three game misconducts.

Vernon defenceman Gordie Nuyens, whose temper switches from cold to hot with the regularity of a thermostat, opened the anarchic proceedings by tangling with Wayne Horning near the Vernon net. Blades' Bobby Stein and Bucks' Ron Lakes sought to join the fray and were thumbed to the exits by Davison.

Four minor penalties later, Sherk and Kelowna defenceman Ken Hamanishi squared off and they each drew five minutes. For raising an additional fuss Sherk also left the game.

Thomas led off scoring in the first period after five minutes had ticked by, scooting through a hole at center ice for a clean breakaway and sending a shot through Holland's pads.

Kasubuchi added a beauty five minutes later when he rounded the left defensive corner on a burst of speed and dumped it at close range behind the harried Holland.

Horning, appearing after a year's suspension, got the next on a screen shot and Buckaroo captain Gruber closed off scoring with two in a row to give them a 5-0 bulge.

Midway through the second period Sherk found Shussel's mark after repeated attacks, exploding a blistering backhander from the point. Kelowna were shorthanded for having too many players on the ice.

It was again Thomas who did the damage in the third, scoring two consecutive goals from Kasubuchi and Evans respectively to open it and adding another to round it off.

MacKay drilled in a slapshot unassisted to give Vernon their second marker but seconds later Larden countered on a similar play.

In action later this week the Blades visit Kelowna Saturday while Kamloops meets the Junior Vees in Penticton Friday.

Gordon Sinnett

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