Blades Give Rockets Slim Chance At Title

Penalty Shot Puts Dampener On Holland's Stellar Net Act

KAMLOOPS 3, VERNON 1

Vernon Blades gave Kamloops Rockets another late-season crack at first place in the Okanagan Junior Hockey League Saturday night.

Albeit reluctantly they fell 3-1 before the Rockets to allow the second-running club to keep pace with the leading Kelowna Buckaroos.

And cheaply was the way the Rockets got their last gasp chance, winning the game on a highly questionable penalty shot awarded them late in the third period.

The game, played in Kamloops, was the final meeting between the two clubs in the regular season which was cut short by a lengthened playoff schedule.

Disappointing Loss

Though unimportant as far as their own standing in the OJHL was concerned, Saturday's loss to Kamloops was a bitter disappointment to the Blades and especially so to their netminded Gary Holland who played by far his best game since entering the Vernon fold.

For most of the night the Rockets had a complete edge in the play, corralling the Blades in their own zone and shooting at will but Holland held them scoreless for two full periods and kicked out more than 30 pucks before succumbing to one let loose by Eric Shishido six minutes into the final period.

With less than five minutes left and the score 1-1 referee Al Swain awarded a penalty shot to Kamloops, claiming a Blade threw his stick at an opposing player on a breakaway. On this particular play Holland clearly appeared to stop two quick shots before the whistle blew.

Kamloops coach Kenny Stewart pulled his high scorer Glen Madson off the bench for the hotly disputed shot which he angled high over Holland's shoulder into the net.

Two minutes later he added an insurance marker as the Blades fell apart at the seams.

Stein Scores Single

Vernon's lone goal was scored by Bob Stein late in the second period on a screaming slapshot from the left side. Buck Sherk, who had his goal string of seven games broken, assisted.

Besides Holland, another defensive star for the Blades was Jim Stephen who kept Kamloops attackers continually off balance with his stiff bodychecking and deft stickchecking.

The Rockets were without the services of three regular players Saturday night, Ron Recchie, Lloyd Wright, and Ron Pilkey. Recchie was sitting out a three-game suspension, drawn in Kelowna and Wright and Pilkey have left town.

Their absence obviously didn't slow the team down as it controlled most of the action. A total of 37 shots were drilled at Holland compared to 28 at Roy Hart.

Besides the penalty shot, 16 other infractions drew the attention of the referee, nine committed by Vernon.

The Blades now have two games left to play in the regular season, both against Kelowna Friday and Saturday. In other action the Rockets take on the Penticton Junior Vees twice.

Face-off time for the Saturday game here at the Civic Arena is 9:00 p.m. All visitors to Vernon's Winter Carnival are invited to see some exciting hockey action between two good clubs.

Frenchies Bombed Under By Canadians

Lumby Flying Frenchmen, despite having the services of veteran Senior Walt Trentini, fell to the Vernon Intermediate Canadians 15-5 in an exhibition hockey game at the Civic Arena Saturday night.

Up from Omaha, of an American Senior league, he scored two goals to help the Frenchmen's cause.

Jim Moro, still awaiting his official release from the WIHL, went wild for the Canadians, racking up 10 points on six goals and four assists.

A sparse crowd watched the "no-contest" game which the Canadians had wrapped up from the opening whistle.

Clerke Leads Local Midgets Over Penticton

The Vernon Midget All-Stars, paced by the four-goal effort of winger Mike Clerke, took a firmer hold of first place in the Okanagan Inter-City League Saturday night.

They beat the visiting Penticton All-Stars 8-3 in a fast-paced, high-scoring contest at the Civic Arena.

It was their last scheduled game with Penticton in the regular season. Vernon meets Kelowna in a two-game, total-goal semi-final playoff February 5 and 8, a week away.

Along with Clerke's four goals Allan Southward collected two and George Watson and Vern Colley each tallied once for the victors.

Penticton goals were scored by Paul McDowell, Marv McCune and Russ Chernoff.

Tom Stecyk's local all-stars took a 2-1 lead in the first period and made it 5-3 in the second. Then Clerke fired three unanswered goals in the closing canto for the final 8-3 count.

Unlike most of the roughhouse midget games this year, Saturday night's clash was quite clean, with six penalties levied altogether. Vernon received four of them.

Bucks' Grip On OJHL Tightens

The Kelowna Buckaroos took a strangle hold on first place in the Okanagan Junior Hockey League last week with a decisive win over their nearest rivals, the Kamloops Rockets.

They swamped the Rockets 8-2 Wednesday night to go ahead four points on 24 wins and three ties. Friday they rolled over the lowly Penticton Junior Vees 12-3 but Kamloops kept desperate pace by ekeing out a 3-1 decision over Vernon Saturday night.

Another win by Kelowna or another loss by Kamloops and the Buckaroos would have the regular season title wrapped up.

To win the league title the Bucks must first get past the Vernon Blades who would like to slow them down and give the Rockets a chance to catch up.

Allowing Kamloops to regain first place would give them a softer opponent in the semi-final playoffs. As it stands now they will close out the regular season with Kelowna and probably meet them head-on in the semis.

With their single win of the week over Penticton Vernon picked up two more points to make their total 18. Their record is 9 and 20.

OJHL Standings

	W	L	T	Pts
Kelowna	24	3	3	51
Kamloops	22	5	3	47
Vernon	9	20	0	18
Penticton	1	28	0	2