This Could Be Jr. Blades' Big Year

Sport Strong, Healthy Lineup For Puck Season

Vernon Blades shake the mothballs out of the familiar blue and white, scrape the rust off their skates and get set for another hockey season Friday night.

The Blades, late starting because of the provincial election held this week, invade the Civic Arena in force Friday at 7:00 p.m. for their first practice.

And, on paper at least, the 1963-64 edition of the Blades shapes up as the strongest and healthiest in the Okanagan Junior "A" Hockey League, scheduled to open Saturday, October 12.

Healthy and strong because they have lost only two players from last season —defenceman John Macko who is overage and forward Ralph Litzenberger who has left for university.

Ranks Depleted

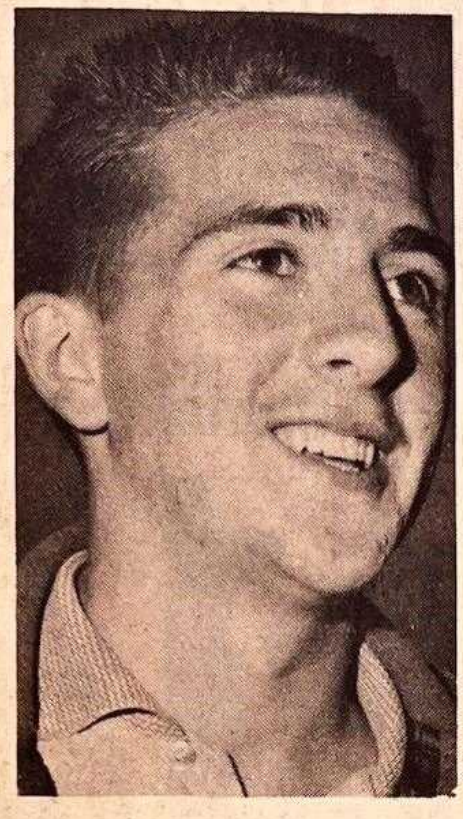
On the other hand both Kelowna Buckaroos and Kamloops Rockets have had their ranks depleted heavily. The Buckaroos have lost at least seven players and Kamloops five.

Missing on the Kelowna lineup this season will be the the twin scoring terrors of Fred Thomas and Bob Gruber, Harvey Stoltz, three of their best defencemen—Phil Larden, Ken Hamanishi, and Ron Lakes—and last, but not least, their goaltender Sid Shussel.

The Rockets have seen the last of center forward Glen Madsen, wingers Larry Bedard and Bill Cochrane, defenceman Ron Recchi and goalie Jim Letcher.

But the Blades — they're "laughing." Coaches Hap Schaefer and Jim Moro will have seven of last year's forwards back and three defencemen. Plus all the many up from juveniles and midgets vying for a spot on the club.

The only big question mark at the moment is a goaltender. There is some doubt whether Gary Holland —last season's netminding marvel for Vernon—will be back so efforts are being made by president Bill Brown to obtain a capable replacement.



FRANK HARRISON
. . . prospect from Coast



GARY HOLLAND
. . . a question mark

Well-stocked Up Front

As stated above the Blades will be well-stocked with front line material.

Fast-skating stickman Bobby Stein will make his return along with stalwart "policeman" Buck Sherk and big Howie McNeil. Sophomore Corky Agar wil be back as well as Ike Coulter, Dale Sorochuk and Gordie Kineshanko.

Patrolling the blue line again will be last season's all-star Gordie Nuyens and Jim Stephen and Dave MacKay. McNeil, because of his size, may see action on defence this year for the first time.

Among those from juveniles expected to try out for the club this season are forwards Wayne Wutzke, Alan Rogan, Bob Ouchi, Ted Palm, Wilf Tantrum and Ed Spelay. Defenceman Maurice Wernicke may also step up to junior.

A number of last season's midgets, who have advanced to juvenile, have to be considered as possible tryouts too, notably forwards George Watson, Mike Clerke, and Vern Colley. Also goalie Dennis Taylor who saw a lot of action for the Blades over the '62-63 season.

The Blades may get added outside strength this year, or as much as the new league ruling limiting a club to four imports, will allow.

One prospect is 19-year old Frank Harrison of Vancouver, a forward who played Junior B for PNE Canucks. Young Harrison is also a soccer player and has been signed up by Vernon National Royalites of the Okanagan Valley Soccer League.

Seeking Goaltender

Club president Brown said this week he has his eye on a young goaltender up in Salmon Arm who he may ask to try out with the Blades. Brown is also seeking players outside the province and has contacted former Vernon senior Canadian George Agar, now coaching Saskatoon Junior Quakers, in this regard.

"I think we'll do real well in the league this year with the team we have shaping up," said Brown. "Our only worry is securing a good goaltender."

Coach Schaefer reports that most of the players he has seen so far are in high spirits and "can't wait to get on the ice."

Season ticket sales are now underway at $8.00 a piece for 18 home games.

The season opens here Tuesday, October 15 with the Blades hosting Kamloops Rockets. It'll be Kiddies Night with all youngsters 12 and under admitted free if accompanied by a parent.

Gordon Skinner
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