Blades Tailspin Into OJHL Cellar

Broncos Sweep Two From Rockets To Surge Into 3rd

KELOWNA 5,5 VERNON 5,2

Vernon Blades careened into the Okanagan Junior "A" Hockey League cellar with a resounding thump on the weekend.

Kelowna Buckaroos provided the initial push with some indirect assistance coming from Penticton-Summerland Broncos.

Friday night in Kelowna the Blades played one of their stronger games of the season in holding the Buckaroos to a 5-5 tie but Saturday night here at the Civic Arena they came apart at the seams and the Cowboys skated off with a 5-2 victory.

A tie and a loss against the powerful Buckaroos isn't too bad a record, especially when you consider the Blues were shorthanded, but it came at the worst of times. Because elsewhere in the Valley the surprising Broncos were busy manhandling Kamloops Rockets twice, 6-5 Friday in Penticton and 6-4 up in Kamloops Saturday.

The twin Bronco victories, coupled with the Blades' lone tie, enabled the ever improving Penticton-Summerland squad to move two points ahead of Vernon into third place, a position they have been fighting for all season.

Another shift in OJHL standings saw the Buckaroos gain three full points on the slumping Rockets and a tie for first place. They each have 31 points, Kamloops on 15 wins and a tie, Kelowna on 14 wins and three ties.

Neither the Blades or Broncos have a chance at finishing any higher than third. With only four games left in the regular schedule the Broncs are nine points off the pace and the Blades 11.

Meaning that the remainder of the league schedule will see two feverish, down-to-the-wire battles in progress—one for first place and one for third. It is conceivable that final OJHL standings may not be decided until the final weekend.

Vernon has two more series left, one with Kamloops next weekend and another with Penticton-Summerland two weeks hence.

The Blades came within five minutes of pulling off their first victory on Kelowna ice in three years Friday night but a power play goal by John Strong at 15:54 of the third period allowed the Bucks to salvage a 5-5 draw.

The Blades trailed 4-1 after a loose first period but four unanswered goals, three in the second and one midway through the third, pulled them into a temporary 5-4 lead.

Scoring for Vernon were Jim Stephen, Ike Coulter, Dale Sorochuk, Marvin Maier and Allan Rogan. Buck Sherk collected three assists.

Strong netted a pair for Kelowna as did Dave Couves. Don Evans hit for a single.

Goal scoring, however, wasn't the main feature of the game Friday. Rather it was the thunderous body checking of Stephen, the Blades' ace defenceman.

In the first period Stephen nailed Kelowna's Lynton Swanson with one of the hardest checks ever seen in the OJHL, sending the ex-Oil King winger to the dressing room with a severe shoulder injury.

His "bodywork" didn't end there as he found occasion during the game to deck numerous other Buckaroos with a well aimed shoulder or hip.

Joining Stephen on the blueline was Gary Koski, back after a month's absence. Together they played a big role in holding the always formidable Kelowna attack in check.

There were 15 penalties called in the game, 11 in a wild third period that saw Vernon's Sorochuk and Kelowna's Marcello Verna exit with game misconducts. The Blades served nine of the 15 sentences issued.

Kelowna had the edge in shots on goal, 38-30.

Saturday night's game at the Civic Arena was another rough, penalty-filled affair. All told 23 were called by referees Alex Kashuba and Art Davison, 16 to Kelowna including a pair of 10-minute misconducts to John Strong and defenceman Don Hebert.

Both clubs played ragged, uninspired hockey but the Buckaroos made the most of the breaks they got to outscore the Blades.

Two rapid-fire goals by Ward Dayle and Dave Cousins within a six-second span gave the Bucks a 2-0 lead midway through the first period.

Coulter narrowed the count to 2-1 before the frame was out but a single goal by Verna in the sandwich session and another unanswered pair early in the third, courtesy Greg Scriver and terry Kasubuchi, put the Kelownians out of reach.

Rogan fired in an unassisted marker at the 11-minute mark of the concluding canto for the Blades' final reply.

Vernon outshot the Bucks 31-28, hardly a consolation.

The Blades were missing star forward Bobby Stein for both games which, needless to say, weighed heavily against their chances.

Girl Curlers Start 2nd Draw

The Vernon Business Girls' Curling Club began its second draw of the season last Thursday night.

With the first draw completed Bertha Young's foursome holds first place with a slight lead over Kay Hunter's rink.

The rinks of Irene Duck, Gladys Watson and Marcelle Stamer are in a three way tie for third place.

The business girls are holding their annual meeting tonight, Jan. 11, immediately following 7 p.m. curling in the upstairs club rooms. All members are urged to attend.

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