

Penticton star impresses King

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

If Vernon Lakers had known Dave King was in the audience on a scouting mission for his Canadian Olympic team Tuesday night in Penticton, perhaps it would have added some incentive for the local club to play a bit better.

As it was, they played poorly and ended up on the short end of an 8-3 thrashing at the hands of the Knights, who chuckle all the way to the showers after each game they host Lakers.

WATCHED MURPHY

Fortunately for me, the evening wasn't a waste since I had the opportunity to interview the Canadian amateur hockey mogul. He was in Penticton for a specific purpose, namely to watch Joe Murphy, (King along with nearly every other college and pro scout in North America) the 17-year-old whiz-kid with Knights.

King is certainly impressed with Murphy and you have to agree that someone of King's profession has had the opportunity to view a lot of amateur hockey flesh in his time.

The trouble is, King's recruitment tactics play second fiddle to the style of NHL scouts and basically he has only a slim chance of encouraging a player like Murphy to consider keeping himself virginal (having never played pro) long enough to qualify for a spot on Team Canada at the 1988 Olympics in Calgary.

Murphy has chosen the college route for his ticket into the

pro hockey ranks since he has entertained thoughts of playing for five top American college teams before finally settling on Michigan State, which is currently ranked number one in the Ivy League circuit. However, there's always a chance that an exceptional athlete such as Murphy will be called up to play for an NHL team during playoff time. Murphy is presently just 17 and will be eligible for the NHL entry draft in 1986, at which time he will already have spent one season with Michigan State.

BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is that it's getting increasingly more difficult for a guy like King to build internationally competitive teams out of what's left over from the NHL. The lure of cash usually seems to sway hockey hearts easier than national pride.

Ironically, it has been the placement of Olympic stars in the ranks of the National Hockey League that has bolstered King's bargaining ability with his hockey prospects.

"It's a great recruiter having kids go into the pro ranks from the Olympic program," said King. "Even kids in the major junior ranks feel the Olympic program is an option for them."

For these reasons, King makes his way to a different hockey game in a different league nearly every night. He's been from Quebec to Nanaimo this season covering leagues which included the QHL, OHA, WHL as well as every junior A league in between. In addition, King will also attend every major tournament in the midget ranks. Actually that's where he caught his



first glimpse of Murphy, who was toiling for the North Shore Winter Club Midget Team last year.

"I saw him in the Air Canada Midget Tournament last year," explained King. "He's very impressive for one so young and, of course, now he's adjusted to junior so he's even better."

King had his chance to talk with Murphy, Tuesday, but whether he was able to get through to Murphy's emotions remains to be seen.

TOUGH SCHEDULE

Just as a falling tidbit, whoever scheduled the Interior Division should have his head examined. Lakers play at home Friday night, against Burnaby Bluehawks, and are scheduled to play Saturday night, in Nanaimo. The tricky bit of scheduling means the local club will have to shower and jump on the bus immediately after the game and drive all night in order to make the 7 a.m. ferry from Horseshoe Bay.

It's not the first time an Interior team has had to contend with such scheduling. Rick Kozuback, coach of Penticton Knights, informed me that his club recently had an identical situation. They left immediately after the game and managed to arrive at Horseshoe Bay just a half hour prior to the ferry's departure.

Considering Penticton is almost two hours closer to the Coast than we are in Vernon, I'd have to say that's going to be some kind of bus ride Friday night.