

KENDALL'S KORNER

Sad to see local player leave Lakers

Vernon minor hockey received a great deal of publicity and praise last spring when four graduates of the local association were selected in the National Hockey League's amateur draft.

Bruce Major, Brent Gilchrist, Jeff Finley, and Rody Poeschke were chosen by four different NHL teams. The latter three have been returned to the Western Hockey League clubs for further seasoning while Major opted for a scholarship at the University of Maine.

It was the first time Vernon had been well represented in the NHL draft. Despite the success of local teams, few local players have gone on to star at the junior 'A' level and even fewer have gotten to display their talents for the Vernon junior squad.

Among the ones who got away were Gilchrist, who went straight from midget to Kelowna (now Spokane) of the WHL; Finley, who played with Summerland of the BCJHL before going to Portland of the WHL; Dean Solheim, who played with Taber of the Alberta Junior League before graduating to Lethbridge of the WHL; and Terry Lowe, who spent three seasons with

Taber before playing his final junior year in Vernon.

Two players who received U.S. scholarships, Kevin Poirier and Major, spent their first season in the BCJHL with Vernon before moving on to other teams... Abbotsford and Richmond, respectively.

We seldom get an opportunity to watch homegrown talent so it was sad to see Troy Mick leave Vernon Lakers this week. Mick was granted his release and intends to spend the remainder of the 1985-86 season with Merritt Warriors.

Mick, along with long-time friend and linemate Dennis Holland, stood the Okanagan minor hockey organization on its ear for a decade. From the time they played pup until last season in midget, Mick and Holland were among the most dominant minor hockey players in the province. It was commonplace for a Vernon rep team to win 10-7 with Holland getting five goals and four assists while Mick scored four goals and added five assists.

Their success, year after year, made them two of the most sought-after 16-year-olds in the province. Holland has decided to pursue a U.S. college scholarship and play in his hometown with Vernon Lakers.



by
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Mick chose the alternative route and hopes to play in the Western Hockey League, with Spokane, next season. In the meantime, he wanted to sharpen his skills with Lakers.

Holland got off to a great start with Lakers and currently ranks second in team scoring. Mick, on the other hand, didn't impress Head Coach Don Moores and received only limited ice time. In eight games, Mick collected seven points.

Mick was disappointed he didn't receive more ice time and asked for his release last weekend. Moores gave him plenty of ice time last Sunday and the slick forward responded with three points against Salmon Arm Blazers. Lakers' President Carl Enemark and Moores felt the problem was resolved after that game,

but Mick wasn't convinced he was going to continue receiving a regular shift.

"I don't have any hard feelings and I'm not blaming Don (Moores) at all," said Mick. "He feels he has to play the older players to win the tight games and he is the coach. But, I'm not going to get any better sitting on the bench and I want to play hockey. I didn't want to cause a problem so I felt it was better for everyone if I asked for my release."

The Lakers' management was sorry to see Mick go, but Moores couldn't guarantee Mick he would receive the type of ice time he wanted. And as Troy said, Moores is the coach. And you can't have the inmates running the prison.

It was a tough decision for Mick. Like many other pro hockey prospects, he has been forced to make a decision that will affect his future... and he is only 16 years old.

If he doesn't have a good season in the BCJHL, he probably won't earn a spot with Spokane next year. And if he doesn't move up to the WHL next season, or at the latest the 1987-88 season, his chance of a pro career vanishes.

On two occasions this season,

Spokane team officials have watched the Lakers, and in particular Mick, play. At one game, in Vernon, Spokane Coach Ernie Gare saw Mick get only six shifts... and three of those were for less than 30 seconds. In his brief appearances on the ice, Mick collected one assist, set up Holland in front of the net for a shot that went inches wide, and drew a penalty when hauled down on a partial breakout.

But, it is tough for Gare, or anyone, to gauge a player's ability with such limited exposure. Mick knows it, Moores knows it, and so does Enemark.

Fortunately, there don't seem to be any hard feelings on either side. Lakers didn't want him to go, but I think they understand Mick's feelings. And Mick didn't want to go, but he made a choice he felt he had to.

Enemark said earlier this week, "I know we're going to miss him because he's a helluva hockey player. They all figure they're stars at 16 years old and there's not much you can do about that."

Mick may not be a star at the junior level right now, but he will be some day. And unfortunately we'll seldom get an opportunity to watch him display his talents.