

Merritt hangs on for puck victory

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

It is time for Vernon Lakers to stop worrying about catching first place Penticton Knights and start looking over their shoulders for Merritt Warriors.

Warriors took a 5-0 lead and hung on to edge Lakers 5-3 in B.C. Junior Hockey League action, Friday, before about 700 fans at the Civic Arena.



KEVIN THORLAKSON
... three points

Lakers (8-5) have 16 points, eight less than the first place Knights. The much-improved Warriors (6-6) now have 12 points.

Lakers' dismal performance in the first two periods bore no resemblance to the impressive showing last Tuesday, in Penticton, when they dropped a 4-3 overtime decision to Knights.

"We're too inconsistent right now," said frustrated Vernon Head Coach Don Moores. "We've got some problems."

Veteran forward Kevin Cheveldave led Warriors with three goals. Two products of Vernon minor hockey, Kevin Thorlakson and Troy Mick, accounted for the other Merritt goals.

Thorlakson, who started his junior career with Lakers two years ago, also collected two assists. Mick, who joined Warriors last week after asking for his release from Vernon, added one assist. Mick has four goals, in four games, since joining Warriors.

Dennis Holland, Steve Humphrey, and Greg Guest replied for Lakers, who trailed 3-0 at the end of the first period and 5-1 after 40 minutes.

Lakers were sluggish in the first 40 minutes and when they did get untracked, in the third period, Merritt netminder Lucien Carrigan made some excellent saves. Carrigan blocked 36 shots, including 19 in the third period.

Vernon took control in the latter stages, but any hopes of a comeback

were stalled with four minutes remaining when it was assessed a bench minor penalty for too many men on the ice. Moores pulled his goalie in the final minute, but Lakers were unable to get any threatening shots at Carrigan with an extra attacker.

At the other end of the rink, Blu Smith and Daryl Dickens combined to block 20 shots for Lakers. Dickens replaced Smith early in the second period after Merritt's fourth goal.

Unlike games between the two clubs during past years, there were a minimal amount of penalties. Vernon took five of nine minors, one of two majors, and one of two game misconducts. The only exchange of fisticuffs occurred with two seconds remaining in the third period when Troy Pohl earned a clear decision over Jeff Veitch, of Warriors.

At the end of the game, Merritt Coach Chuck Tapp and several Vernon players exchanged verbal jabs on the ice ... an indication that the fierce rivalry between the two clubs may heat up again this season.

Tapp, who was fired after a brief stint as Lakers' head coach in 1983, said winning in Vernon is special. "Any win is satisfying," Tapp said, "but beating the Lakers is a little sweeter."

"I like the city (Vernon) and the people here are great, but I've got some hard feelings towards (Lakers' President Carl) Enemark. He is the one who fired me."

Tapp praised the four Vernon minor hockey graduates in his line-up. In addition to Thorlakson and Mick, defencemen Wes Elliott and Keith Chase play on the Merritt blue line corps.

"The Vernon kids have been doing a great job for me," Tapp said. "I'm happy to have them."

Lakers attempt to get back on the winning track tonight when they battle the Packers, in Kelowna.

In other BCJHL games Friday, Pat Austin scored three goals to lead Richmond Sockeyes over Nanaimo Clippers 11-4, Summerland Buckaroos nipped Langley Eagles 8-7 in overtime, and Kelowna downed Salmon Arm Blazers 6-2.