

Lakers change end of story

Going to last Sunday's B.C. Junior Hockey League game at the Vernon Civic Arena was like starting to read a book when you already know the ending.

Vernon Lakers were hosting first place Penticton Knights, who had lost only once in their first 17 outings. Knights were expected to skate on to the ice, pick up their two points, and take their bus home. They had good reason to be confident . . . Vernon beats Penticton only slightly more often than Halley's Comet becomes visible to the human eye.

To refresh your memory, Lakers had not defeated Knights since February of last season. To further exemplify Penticton's dominance over Vernon . . . the defending Western Canada champions have not lost a home game to Lakers in more than three years.

But to the surprise of everyone, particularly Knights, Lakers changed the ending to the all-too-familiar story. Vernon turned in its best performance of the season to upset Knights 8-4. The win strengthened Lakers' hold on third place and pro-

vided some hope of Vernon catching the front-running Knights and second place Kelowna Packers.

To say Sunday's victory was a big one for Vernon, is the understatement of the year. Not only does the win help in the standings, it gives the club confidence as it heads out on a three-game coast trip.

The game gave some encouraging signs that one, or more, players may be ready to emerge as team leaders.

Defenceman Murray Baron was outstanding before he was ejected for fighting Penticton tough guy Peter deGraff. Baron threw some crushing checks, moved the puck well out of his end, and cleared the front of his net before dropping his gloves with deGraff. He obviously felt, perhaps justifiably, that it was more important for him to prove the Lakers weren't going to be pushed around than for him to finish the game.

Speedy Shawn Lofroth scored two goals and turned in his best effort of the season. Lofroth was moved from defence to forward this season in an attempt to take advantage of his



by
Don Kendall

Daily News
Sports Editor

speed and reduce the chance of injuries. He was plagued by a series of injuries during the 1984-85 season. The experiment was not successful and Lofroth looked much more at home on defence last Sunday. If he continues that style of play, he'll become one of the best offensive weapons in the league . . . something everyone thought he would be.

Sophomore forward Wes Gentles collected only one assist, on eight goals, but was outstanding. Gentles apparently decided it was time to dish out some of the physical punishment that he and his team-mates had been absorbing in the first 15 games of the season. Gentles hit every blue

shirt in sight and did an excellent job killing penalties.

Goaltender Darryl Dickens has been a standout since Lakers acquired him last month from Abbotsford. Night after night, Dickens has given Vernon consistency between the pipes. There were about 10 pro and college scouts at last Sunday's game and they were no doubt impressed with the netminder's stand-up style.

There was more good news after the game when Lakers announced BCJHL veterans Campbell Blair and Frank Dutoff would be joining the club. Blair, a defenceman, was in this third season with Summerland Buckaroos. In 15 games, the 19-year-old rearguard has collected 24 points.

Dutoff, a speedster, was a 20-goal scorer last season for Lakers. He returned to Vernon on Sunday after working on oil fields in Alberta.

After a disappointing 4-2 loss Saturday night in Merritt, Lakers needed something to lift their spirits . . . and rekindle fan interest in the club. A win over Penticton was just what the doctor ordered.