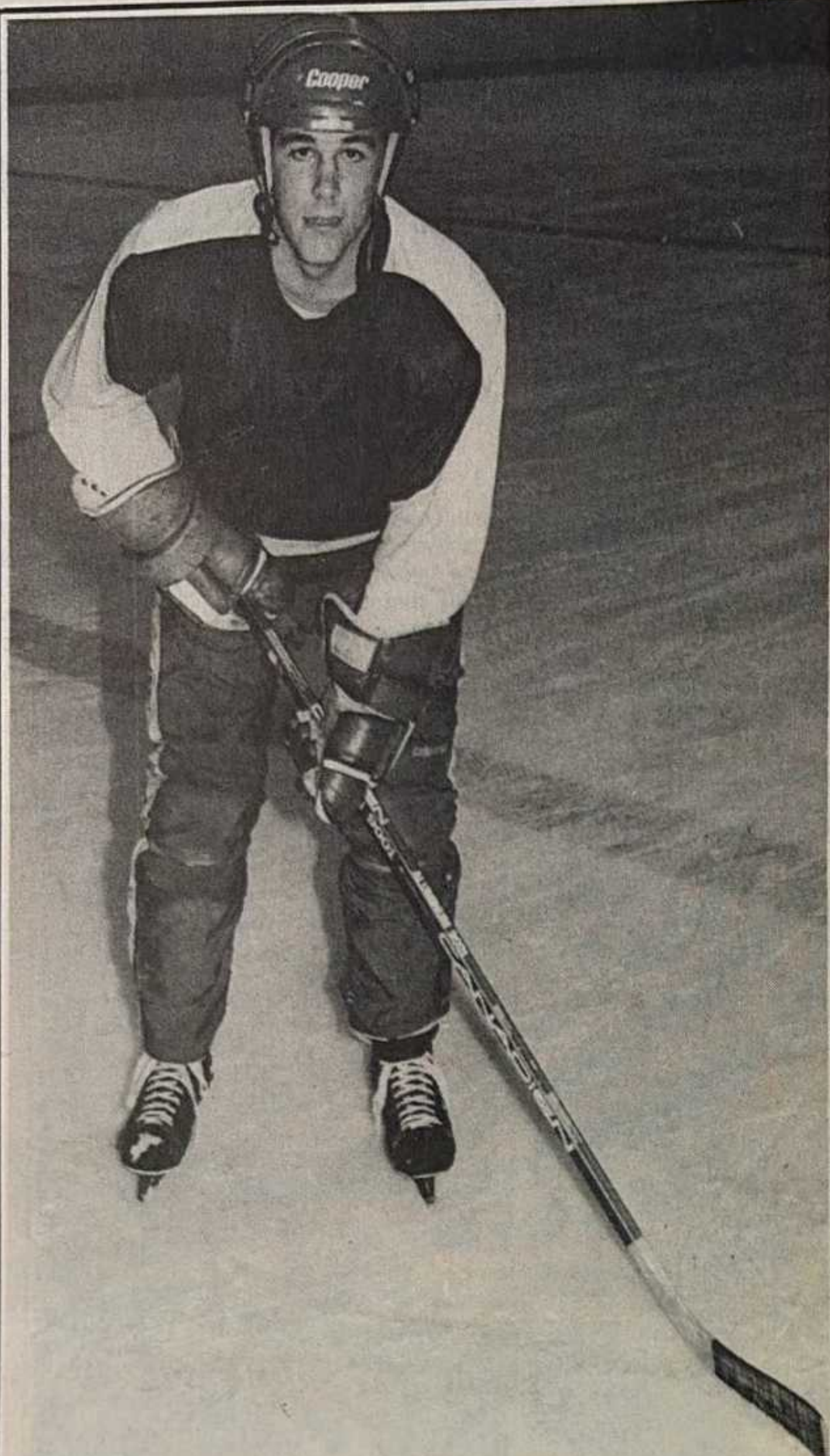




Campbell Blaire, 19, was recently purchased outright by Lakers' management in a deal with Summerland Buckaroos. The stocky defenceman, a native of Prince George, led Bucks in individual points having accumulated 24 points in just 15 games. His ability to make quick passes and pressure decisions on the blueline will be a welcome to lakers who are chasing their first BCJHL title. (Daily News Photo)

Veteran defenceman joins local juniors

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

Struggling with inconsistency and hoping to reduce their goals against record, Vernon Lakers management recently made a wise purchase in the deal with Summerland Buckaroos for 19-year-old defenceman Campbell Blaire.

Blair, a third-year veteran of the BCJHL Interior Division, two of which have been in Summerland, is a stocky hard-hitting blueliner with a welcome ability to move the puck wisely and with great effect. In 15 games with the Buckaroos this season, Blair accumulated 24 points.

However, Summerland, unlike the Vernon Civic Arena, has a large ice surface and Blair will find he'll have to make some changes in his game to maintain his effectiveness in the Vernon corral.

"I don't think I'll have trouble adjusting to the small rink," he suggested. "I don't usually rush the puck, I move it."

Blair is going to be mated to defensive-minded Chris Saunders according to Lakers' Head Coach Don Moores. In this way, Moores will cover a number of areas as well as allow the two to complement each other's style with their way of playing.

Saunders, a clever passer and excellent puck-handler, as well as a gifted skater, never commits himself to the forward position during the game but prefers, instead, to always be back of the play. Since Blair is more offensively minded he'll surely have the green light from Moores to do what he wishes when he gets the puck since Saunders will always be there to provide a back-up

role.

However, Blair isn't exactly a one-dimensional defenceman. Selected to the BCJHL Interior Division All-star team last season, the 5'10", 185 lb. blueliner can throw solid body-checks into his opponents and will have no trouble clearing the front of the net.

Meanwhile, the Prince George native, a former team-mate of Lakers' forward Wes Gentles while with Prince George Spruce Kings of the PCJHL, is happily settling into his new environment along with his new club.

"The guys here seem good and I'm happy to be here," he explained. "We've got a good club here . . . good enough to win the BCJHL . . . if we all work hard we'll beat 20 guys who don't on any given night."

As his accumulated points can testify, Blair is obviously used to a lot of ice time and obviously has the work ethic ground into him. His stability and leadership may be just what the local club have been lacking until this point in the season.

One Vernon player who is looking forward to playing with the newest addition to the team is Saunders.

"We'll be a good match for one another because I'm defensive-minded and he's an offensive defenceman," Saunders said.

Meanwhile, Blair will get his baptism by fire with Lakers when the club heads to the Coast Thursday for the start of a three-game road trip that will see them face three of the tougher teams in the league's other division. The team will close out the month, following their Coastal trip, by playing six of their seven games at home during November.