

Lakers get quick jump on Blazers

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

It took Vernon Lakers a little while to wear off their Christmas turkey Saturday night — about eight and a half minutes to be exact.

Lakers unleashed a barrage of goals on visiting Shuswap Blazers, in the first period Saturday, en route to an easy 9-4 victory in their B.C. Junior Hockey League contest.

The win kept the Vernon squad a single point back of Kelowna Packers and Penticton Knights in the battle for supremacy in the BCJHL Interior Division. Lakers have 43 points while Packers and Knights, both losers in Saturday's action, have 44. Blazers are last in the Interior with 18 points.

Greg Guest and Doug Spooner each scored twice to help Lakers to a 6-1 first period lead. Shannon Pohl and Stacey Hartnell also chipped in goals in the opening frame to bury the visiting Blazers early in the night.

With the absence of Dennis Holland and Trevor Pohl, the Vernon club was missing the bulk of its firepower up front but a solid team effort and a balanced scoring attack made up the slack.

Lakers were running away with the game until Blazers settled down and put up a concentrated struggle following a change in goaltenders when the score hit 5-0 at the 17:06 mark of the opening frame.

Blazers matched the Vernon team goal-for-goal thereafter with their first one coming at 18:04, of the first period, by Dan Bustin. Hartnell's marker completed the first period scoring.

Defenceman Sean Lofroth and Steve Humphrey tallied for Lakers in the second period while Blazers got goals from Jeff Kentel and Kevin Scott.

Blueliner Sean Hartnell accounted for the only Vernon goal in the third stanza while Darren Kwaikowski replied for Shuswap.

Lakers outshot Blazers by a 60-35 margin.

As the scoring seemed to indicate, the lengthy layoff began to catch up with Lakers as the game wore on and it was especially apparent to Head Coach Don Moores.

"I thought we really looked tired in the third period," he explained. "It really began to show."

Lakers were playing their first league game since Dec. 10 giving them the longest Christmas layoff period of any team in the league. However, all things considered, the lengthy downtime hasn't been all that damaging.

Although he did express satisfaction in the fact that the league had deducted points from the two main rivals in the Interior Division, Moores doesn't seem all that concerned with the possibility of taking over first place in the division.

"The way I look at it, all first place would give us is home-ice advantage, but other than that, it's no big deal," he said.

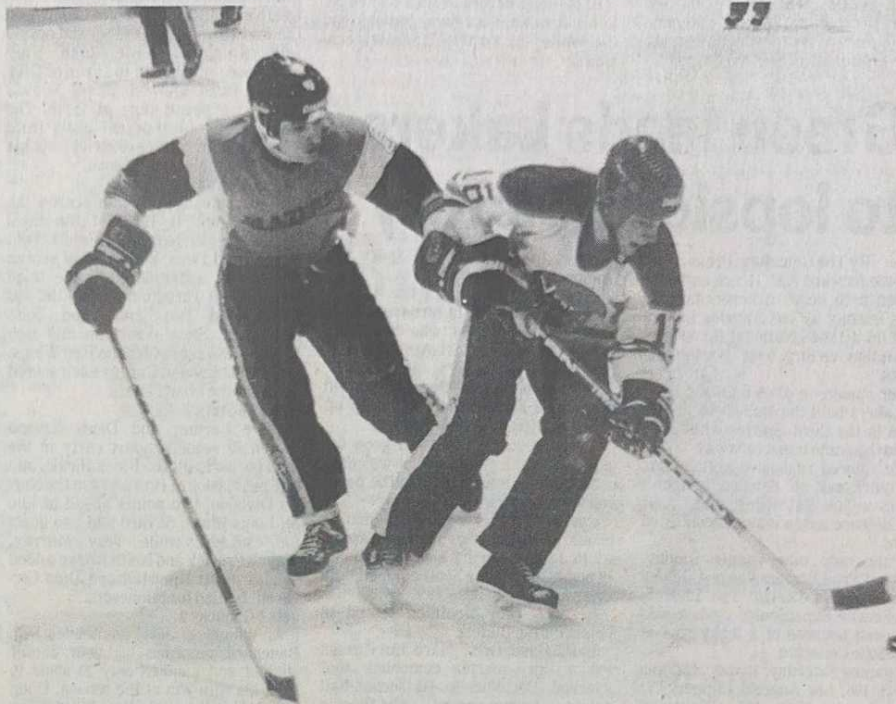
However, he was more opinionated on the topic of the league decision last week in the case of using ineligible players.

"Both teams (Penticton and Kelowna) are fortunate that they only checked two weeks of the schedule otherwise those two teams would have lost a lot more points."

In other action Saturday night, Delta defeated Penticton 5-3, Summerland edged Kelowna 5-4, Richmond humbled Abbotsford 11-2, and Nanaimo beat Langley 10-4.

Sunday, Shuswap surprised the red-hot Summerland Buckaroos with a 6-4 victory, in Salmon Arm, while Sidney Capitals beat Langley Eagles 7-4.

Lakers next action is Thursday night when they travel to Kelowna to take on the Packers. The next home game is Friday night when Summerland will be in town.



STEVE HUMPHREY of Vernon Lakers shakes off a Shuswap defenceman during third-period action Saturday night at the Civic Arena. Lakers ran up a 5-0 lead in the first period en route to a convincing 9-4

victory over Blazers in their first BCJHL game since early December. Lakers, who play 10 times this month, are just one point out of first place in the Interior Division. (Daily News Photo)

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Seattle hoop squad too tough for Panthers

Vernon Panthers took it on the chin at the hands of 73-71 after three quarters.