

Intimidation works for Knights

You have to hand it to a guy like Rick Kozuback for knowing how to win through intimidation ... just ask Bruce Allison, president of the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association, about that one.

Allison, in an unprecedented move earlier this week, dismissed all charges involving ineligible players, against Kozuback and Penticton Knights with whom Kozuback serves as head coach and chief goof.

It's difficult to say at this point just which one of these guys is more responsible than the other but I'd say between the two of them they've set the B.C. Junior Hockey League back 20 years with their actions.

Kozuback was first levied with a fine and a suspension for using forward Bill Thomas, of Calgary, in games earlier in the season before Knights had obtained his release from his former junior club.

However, Kozuback managed to receive an ex parte court injunction to counteract the BCAHA sentence when he marched into a hearing, in Kelowna, with team lawyer in hand.

This intimidation move gained Kozuback and Knights some valuable time to think about their next move. It also struck fear into the hearts of BCAHA executive who weren't prepared to deal with anyone questioning their authority or their decision making.

A full hearing was rescheduled for Dec. 20 at which time everyone felt the final word would be passed on, one way or another. Word was passed down to Knights, and two other teams too, in fact, but it wasn't the final word either as it turns out. Kozuback was re-issued with the \$1,000 fine he had received earlier in the month.

Case closed. Or at least it should have been at that point.

Knights, however, contended that they had received permission from the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association head office in Ottawa to play Thomas. One would seriously doubt anybody, least of all Penticton Knights, would go to such extreme lengths to obtain permission to use a player.



by
Jim Judd

Daily News
Sports Writer

But Allison believed Knights' story and dropped all charges against the team. That action reversed the decision by BCJHL last week which saw five teams fined and the points taken away from three clubs.

In anticipation of Allison's decision Monday, BCJHL President Les Jeboult resigned his position. Jeboult obviously felt that if the BCAHA was going to override its decisions and he really didn't want to be a puppet figure at the head of a hockey league.

Effectively, what Allison's decision means is that it's alright for the

rules to be broken if you carry enough clout. A more dangerous precedent has now been set by the BCAHA because now the door has been flung open to all sorts of mischief by teams in the league.

For instance, if the use of ineligible players is considered excusable by the BCAHA, then what's to stop teams from tampering with players signed by other teams? If a team owner has enough money in his pocket and enough lack of conscience working for him, he can buy as good a team as he wants.

In fact, and this isn't to suggest that Lakers' management fits into the above description, certain members of Lakers' organization have already indicated that if charges against Kozuback were dropped, then they would have no qualms about offering money under the table to choice players around the league in order to entice them in to coming to play for Lakers.

Bear in mind, of course, that this was said purely to illustrate a point and there is no reason for me, or

anyone else, to believe that such a practice would be put into use.

It wouldn't be much different than a common practice already being used by teams in the BCJHL.

Some teams are paying players exceptional sums of money to stay put and play hockey for that team instead of plying their trade elsewhere. Reliable sources indicate that at least one team located in the Okanagan is guilty of this practice.

In the near future, the BCJHL could turn into a horror show, of underhanded procedures. So much so, in fact, that it wouldn't surprise me to learn that a year or two down the road the league may be outlawed by the CAHA.

Perhaps it will be best in the long run because few of the teams, least of all Penticton Knights and Rick Kozuback, hold any respect for the BCJHL and its ability to govern itself.

Eventually, if unchecked, it will degenerate into things far worse.

Thank you Mr. Kozuback, I always said you were a class act.

Fines, suspensions dropped by BCAHA

By DON KENDALL
Daily News Sports Editor

Penticton Knights feel they are the class of the B.C. Junior Hockey League... and therefore control the league. Now, the Knights also appear to be controlling the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association.

The BCAHA has dropped all charges against Penticton Knights and Coach Rick Kozuback over the use of an alleged ineligible player.

Penticton team spokesman Ron Taylor said BCAHA President Bruce Allison informed Knights of his decision late Monday night.

Kozuback was suspended for 10 games and the Knights fined \$1,000 last month for using Bill Thomas in BCJHL games from Sept. 24 to Nov. 4 when his eligibility was in question.

The association then decided to review the decision after the Knights won an ex parte court injunction in Kelowna which set aside the suspension and fine pending a full hearing.

On Monday, the BCJHL restored points that were withdrawn from three Interior Division teams, including Penticton.

BCJHL President Les Jeboult announced last week that Merritt Centennials had lost 10 points while Penticton and Kelowna Packers had lost eight points apiece for using ineligible players. Jeboult resigned as president of the league last Sunday in a dispute over enforcing the rules.

BCJHL Vice-president Don Lancaster, of Penticton, said the penalties

are being reviewed by the league and the points have been restored until a meeting Jan. 14, in Nanaimo, with the BCAHA.

Vernon Lakers' General Manager Vern Dye said he can't believe the decisions that have been made in the past 48 hours. "I can't figure out who is running our league," Dye said. "Our president resigned so who is making all these decisions?"

Dye, who has been involved with the BCJHL for 25 years, said he has never seen such a bizarre sequence of events. And as far as he is concerned, Penticton isn't going to escape unscathed.

"It is going to be an interesting meeting in Nanaimo," Dye said. "Some teams in our league abide by the rules and regulations and they aren't going to stand for one team doing whatever it wants. We still have some good people involved with our league and I'm sure they feel the same way I do."

Kozuback, who guided Knights to the Centennial Cup final last spring, said he was "relieved it's all over" and he can get back to coaching his team from the bench. However, he is still under suspension for his part in a bench-emptying brawl at the conclusion of a game, in December, against Kelowna.

Miami unlike other survivors

By The Associated Press

Unlike the three other survivors in National Football League playoffs, Miami Dolphins don't have an intimidating defence or a 1,000-yard rusher.

But they have the longest winning streak — eight — and the best track record for getting to the Super Bowl.

While Chicago Bears, with the best defence in the league and Walter Payton, the NFL's all-time leading

proved for five weeks before nearly being run over by Cleveland's Earnest Byner and Kevin Mack last Saturday. The Dolphins escaped with a 24-21 victory after trailing 21-3.

Defensive co-ordinator Chuck Studley adds: "We certainly hadn't reached the point of perfection yet. But we weren't giving up many points in the last few weeks and I thought things were coming together."

As for the running game, it was good enough against Cleveland to indicate

Lakers to visit Kelowna

Vernon Lakers will have an opportunity to put some of their new-found talent to work Thursday night when they travel to Kelowna for a game against Packers, at Memorial Arena, in Kelowna.

Packers currently occupy second place in the B.C. Junior Hockey League Interior Division while Lakers are a point behind them in third place so a victory by the Vernon team would mean trading places with Packers for their spot in the division.

Expected to suit up for Lakers will be a pair of former WHL players, Mark McCleary and Troy Backogear, who are both forwards.

Both Lakers and Packers trail front-running Penticton Knights, who saw action Tuesday night.

Knights got four goals from Lee Davidson in a 9-4 victory over Merritt Warriors to give Knights a two-point edge over Packers at the top of the BC-JHL.

In the evening's only other game, Coastal Division leading Richmond Sockeyes lost 6-3 to second-place Delta Flyers.

In addition to Davidson's four goals, Penticton also got singles from Cal Brown, Keven Melrose, David Shields, Chris Anderson and Scott Rawson.

The Knights, playing under assistant coach Grant Konopacki while Kozuback sits out an eight game suspension for a drawl, ground out the first two periods with leads of 2-1 and 4-2, then opened up with five goals in the third.

Replying for the fifth-place Warriors, who were outshot 64-23, were Kevin Thorlakson, Brad Smiley, Rob Revell and Mike Catchpole.

Gord MacInness scored twice as the Flyers outhustled Richmond, which Delta now trails by 10 points. It was the Sockeye's first loss to a Coastal Division team and only their sixth defeat in 33 games.

Delta goaltender Chris Dickson was a key to the win, as the Flyers won while being outshot 39-30.

Delta, which took a 1-0 edge in the first period and went ahead 5-2 in the second, got singles from Rod Ware, Rich Stentiford, Gerry Mumford and Mitch Evanish.

Jim Butterworth, Mike O'Hara and Darren Matias scored for Richmond.

Nanaimo begins its second swing through the Interior Division this weekend as they visit to Summerland, Thursday night.