

Players encourage female team-mate

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

While the current trends in the game of professional hockey have resulted in youngsters making career decisions very early in life, one member of the Vernon Minor Hockey Association finds herself having to make a decision for a different reason.

Janine Foisy, who turns 13 in February, will soon reach a crossroad in her hockey career. She must choose whether she will continue with her favorite sport or simply give in to the growing pressure of being too small to effectively compete with her male counterparts.

Due to the liberal attitudes of executive members of Vernon Minor Hockey Association and recent precedents set in other amateur hockey associations across the country, Foisy won't have to give up her sport because of discrimination against her gender.

A recent decision by the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association reversed an earlier decision by the provincial association barring a 13-year-old girl from Letellier, Man., from playing on her local pee wee team.

Quite contrary to the Manitoba situation, everyone, from the minor hockey executive, through coaching and down to team-mates in Vernon agree that Foisy can play with and against boys in the Vernon organization for as long as she wishes.

"I don't think I or the association would ever make such a decision," suggested Vernon Minor Hockey President Dan Oxnard. "As long as she (Foisy) can compete, it would be her decision... we wouldn't discriminate in any way shape or form."

Meanwhile, Foisy's team-mates not only tolerate her presence on the ice, but are trying to encourage her to continue with the game on into bantam level and beyond.

"She's awesome," quipped team-mates Chris Wale and Darryl Laridsen in unison when questioned about their female team-mate's playing ability. "She's one of our best players."

Foisy, who has been in the Vernon minor hockey system for four years now, has scored six goals and set up 25 others so far this season with Tradeland Realty of the Vernon Pee Wee House League. Obviously, the comments made by Wale and Laridsen aren't far off track.

Foisy's playmaking ability is her greatest asset and one which she works on constantly.

"I'll shoot the puck if I have a chance, otherwise I'd rather have one of the bigger guys shoot," she explained. "I don't want to get too deep in (the offensive zone) so I can backcheck."

However, her explanation of the reason for her playmaking skills is proof that the diminutive pee wee all-star is fast being outdistanced in terms of sheer size by her team-mates and opponents.

"I want to play further but it's just my size," she explained. "Even now some of the boys are bigger... they want me to play bantam with them though."

"I want to play next year. I have one more year of pee wees, but I think I'm too small to play bantams."

Foisy's parents, who were never skeptical of her desire to play the male-dominated sport, agreed from the outset that the bantam level would be the limit. It was that level that bodychecking was to be introduced to minor hockey leagues.

However, a rule change this season brought bodychecking into the pee wee level and totally caught the Foisy family off guard. It was discovered, though, that their daughter was still holding her own in the league in spite of the additional physical activity.

"She (Janine) has to watch a little more now that there's bodychecking," explained her mother, Lois.

"But I hit too," chirped Janine who had been overhearing her mother's comments.

However, what her parents hadn't counted on was the moral and physical support their daughter would receive from her team-mates.

"The boys are really good to her,

they stick up for her," said her mother. "They say 'we'll look after you.'"

As far as her team-mates are concerned the reason for supporting their little forward goes beyond the fact that she is simply female. In the unwritten laws of the game, if a team has a flashy forward who's small in stature, the bigger players make it their job to see that that player is allowed to play without being intimidated by the opposition.

Obviously, from talking with team-mates and opponents, it's apparent that Foisy's presence in the Vernon Minor Hockey Association has had more of an impact than is immediately noticed. Her present in the game is helping youngsters strive towards accepting female counterparts in a game that has traditionally been reserved for males. The whole idea of sexual discrimination has been put out of their minds because of Foisy.

"If she was good enough, a girl should be able to play at any level," said Wale when questioned about his thoughts on the subject. Laridsen mimicked his team-mate's attitude.

While pee wee players in the Vernon association had adjusted their attitudes, it's not always the case when Tradeland Realty attends tournaments in other centers.

"Some players do resent the fact that I'm playing but it's usually when I go to tournaments out of town that I get the resentment," she said.

In spite of what resistance there seems to be in the sport, Foisy is adamant in her belief that it should be wide open to both sexes.

"If any girls are capable of playing they should be allowed to play," she said.

Her plans for retirement seem to indicate that she would still pursue her first interest in sports. She would like to try to organize an all-girl team, or hopes that one will be organized in the next year or so.

However, because of her presence in the Vernon Minor Hockey Association, other female players have been encouraged to try their hand at the sport. Several girls have expressed a desire to join the Vernon organization next season, although they'll have to work hard at the game to meet the standard of play set down by Foisy who is blazing a trail for girls of the future to follow.

Holland leans towards Portland

Dennis Holland will probably be wearing a black and red hockey uniform, in Portland, next winter.

Holland is expected to confirm within the next 24 hours that he has agreed to sign a affiliated player card with Portland Winter Hawks, of the Western Hockey League.

Until now, the 16-year-old centre had been undecided whether to accept a U.S. college scholarship or join the Winter Hawks. Portland General Manager Brian Shaw visited Holland last weekend and asked for an answer by tonight.

"We're leaning to Portland," Holland said. "There are still a few things to discuss about my contract, but they've made me a pretty good offer."

The contract includes a guaranteed

college education, even if he doesn't earn a berth on the Portland roster next season.

"Hopefully, we'll reach a final decision tonight," he said.

Holland, in his rookie season with Vernon lakers, leads the club in scoring with 78 points, including 34 goals.

He admits the prospect of playing with three other Vernon players, in Portland, has influenced his decision. Defencemen Jeff Finley and Jay Stark are currently playing on the Winter Hawks' blue line corps. Forward Troy Mick, who played minor hockey on the same line as Holland for eight years, signed an affiliated player card with Portland last week.

"It will be nice going there and already having some friends," Holland said. "It will make the adjustment easier."

LOOK BACK FIVE YEARS

JAN., 1981

Vernon Lakers general manager Hank Aarsen said today the BCJHL club will complete the current season despite losing several key players. "There's no doubt we will continue to operate," Aarsen said. "We will do the best we can with the players we have." Forwards Dave Fish and Roger Foulds, defencemen Les Creelman and Mike Wiebe, along with goalie Rex Slizak quit the club this week but Wiebe has since reconsidered and will remain with the squad.

JAN., 1981

Nine-year-old Richard Moncion of Vernon was named the top mini-midget following a three-race cross country skiing series held last month. Moncion won his age group at the last race of the series.