

Vernon players star at college

By JIM JUDD
Daily News Sports

A pair of Vernon Minor Hockey products are directly responsible for the recent turnaround by University of Maine Black Bears and are pegged by Maine coaching staff to figure in the club's future.

Bruce Major, who is a freshman with University of Maine, along with Dave Wensley, a sophomore, represent Black Bears' one-two scoring punch this season and their presence has resulted in hopes for the future for this rebuilding NCAA team.

"They're definitely our future," suggested Black Bears' Head Coach Shawn Walsh of the local hockey products.

Major, a draft choice of Quebec Nordiques in last June's amateur draft, played junior A hockey in both Vernon and Richmond, of the B.C. Junior Hockey League, prior to accepting a full scholarship program at Maine.

Wensley was given a full scholarship by Black Bears in 1984 after completing a highly successful season with Lakers, when he led the team in in-

dividual scoring statistics.

Black Bears have occupied the cellar of the Hockey East Conference of the National Collegiate Athletic Conference first division for the past three years. There is a spark of hope, however, since the club won just five games all last season and has bettered its record already this season, though a 6-21-1 record is only marginally better.

As Walsh points out, Black Bears have lost 11 of those games by just one goal this season and in general the team is beginning to look better on the ice.

"We're struggling but not as much as our record indicates," Walsh explained. "We're in the midst of rebuilding."

However, rebuilding is a slow, gradual process at the college level since there are no trades. Teams must rely strictly on their scouting reports and on the talent they sign to overcome bad seasons. Of course, the essential ingredient is for players to play up to their potential and the sooner that happens the better of these college teams seem to be.



BRUCE MAJOR

DAVE WENSLEY

"Your rebuilding growth rate depends on how many older players you can get playing well," Walsh said.

It's also a bonus for a college team to get a sparkling performance from a freshman player. Such has been the case with Major, who has scored eight goals and exuded a maturity and confidence in his style of play that has made Black Bears' coaching staff glad they had the presence of mind to obtain him.

"Bruce has been a tremendous boost

for our team," Walsh concurred. "Very rarely does a freshman come in and climatize himself so easily as Bruce has."

On the other hand, Wensley took a slightly longer period of adjustment though he, too, has turned into an integral part of Bears' overall plan. However, as he often did as a junior, Wensley has gone through some dry periods on the ice with Maine this season.

"He (Wensley) has gone nine games now without a goal," said Walsh, though the Vernon native still leads the club in scoring with 10 goals and 12 assists.

"He's really matured as a person," Walsh continued. "Dave is what college hockey is all about... he came in here without a lot of personal discipline but he's improving immensely."

Meanwhile, the presence of the two Vernon players, in addition to the boost in play by Black Bears, has resulted in a resurgence of popularity for the University club at the gate. According to Walsh, the team has enjoyed terrific

fan support this season in spite of their losing record.

"Our fans see the turnaround and we've averaged 3,690 per game lately," Walsh said.

That figure, by the way, represents a crowd of more than 200 above the sellout figure.

And, players such as Wensley and Major aren't disappointing their loyal following either. Earlier this season, Major set an NCAA record for the fastest goal from the start of the game. The lanky centre intercepted a pass at the defending team's blue line after losing the draw, went in alone and scored just eight seconds into the contest.

Another player that University of Maine's coaching staff feels will be an asset, recently became the property of Vernon Lakers. Black Bears are currently negotiating with goaltender Scott King, recently acquired by Lakers from Richmond Sockeyes. King has been a steady performer in net for the local club since his acquisition and is a former all-star netminder in the BCJHL.

Holland delays decision

Vernon scoring sensation Dennis Holland has delayed his decision on an offer from Portland Winter Hawks, of the Western Hockey League.

Winter Hawks hope to lure the slick centre, who turned 17 today, to Portland for the 1986-87 season.

Holland and his parents met with Portland General Manager Brian Shaw last weekend and spoke on the telephone with Shaw, twice, this week. The offer includes a college scholarship.

Holland's mother, Lee, said there are still a few questions unanswered. "We don't want to rush into anything," she said. "There are still a few things, mainly regarding Dennis' education, that we want to clear up before we sign anything."

The Hollands will meet with Shaw in mid-February when Winter Hawks play at Kamloops. "We'll make our final decision after talking with him (Shaw) again," she said.

Four American universities have also contacted Holland about attending college, on a hockey scholarship, after he completes grade 12 next year.



B.C. GAMES TEAM

Vernon's Shirley White foursome will represent the Okanagan Zone in women's curling at the B.C. Winter Games, Feb. 27 to March 2, in Terrace. From left are White, her twin daughters Lesley and Lori, who play third and second respectively, and coach Vicky Midtdal. Curling lead for White will be Thelma Trickett.

(Daily News Photo)

Laface advances to Consols round

Vernon's Wayne Laface defeated Bob Chlan of Prince George 9-5.

and Laface aced Ian Cullen of Prince Rupert 5-4.

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Editor — DON KENDALL

Canada earns scoreless draw

VANCOUVER (CP) — The negative fear factor — possible failure in Canada's first World Cup appearance later this year in Mexico — may be disappearing for the national soccer team.

The short-staffed Canadians put on a strong performance Wednesday night in a scoreless tie against Paraguay, a nation which fought to an impressive 1-1 draw last year against mighty Brazil.

Canada actually dominated the international exhibition before 18,003 fans in domed B.C. Place Stadium, especially in the opening half when the Canadians surprised the South Americans by consistently going on attack.

"This gives us more reason to go to Mexico and not really fear the opposition," said Canadian fullback Bobby Lenarduzzi, one of three players on loan from Tacoma Stars of the Major Indoor Soccer League. "It was a good,

back and attempted to dominate midfield.

Fernandez made 10 saves, including seven in the first half, and was sharp on dangerous opportunities by Mitchell, Lenarduzzi and striker Barry Dearden.

Dearden, of North Vancouver, and midfielder Jamie Lowery of Port Alberni, B.C., were inserted into the starting lineup and played solidly, along with second-half substitutes Steve Nesin, Dominic Mobilio, Iain Baird and Trevor McCallum.

Mobilio, 17, a Vancouver high school student, almost scored in the second half, but his rising shot from 12 yards went over the crossbar.

MITCHELL PLEASED

"For my first outdoor game in six months, it felt great," said the ever-dangerous Mitchell. "I found I had much more space to work in after play-