

Lakers-Packers series could have been a gooder

It could have been a lovely war.

Kelowna Packer goalie Frank Romeo threw down the gauntlet earlier this week with some verbal shots at this former Vernon junior coach Mike Enemark. However, Enemark declined to fire back.

It all started in an article appearing in the Feb. 22 edition of the Kelowna newspaper Capital News. In the article Romeo was quoted as follows: "He (Enemark) was the kind of coach that would give up when he was down by a couple of goals. Don Moores (former Lakers coach who was fired Feb. 9) was the only thing they had going for them. Enemark is a good guy and everything but he's not ready for the junior coaching ranks. With what I know of Enemark, if we can get a couple of quick goals we can wrap the game up. We're expecting to blow them out to show them that when we're in the playoffs we're already one step ahead of them."

Tough talk, to be sure. Never one to balk at starting a good scrap, I clipped out the article and phoned Enemark to get his reaction to those public comments. His immediate words were: "It's no big deal."

Whaddya mean no big deal? It could be if you wanted it to be. I even offered to give Enemark the article so he could pin it up in the Lakers' dressing room where it might serve a useful motivational purpose. Enemark said it didn't matter.

What Romeo said was plain dumb. I was surprised that he would make a



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public statement knocking his former coach. Especially with the playoffs just around the corner.

Enemark could have carried this thing considerably further, thereby generating a great deal of publicity. That kind of bad blood has a proven tendency to sell tickets. Bad blood equals box office revenue.

If I were Enemark I would have a lot to reply to Romeo. Maybe not have one of my guys go out to hit him, but the hint might not hurt. If people think they might miss something they'll line up to buy a ticket. As it is, the Laker-Packer series could be billed as a non-event. Oh well, can't blame Frank Romeo. He tried to start a war.

On the other hand, Enemark might be playing it smart. He is predicting a seven-game series against Kelowna and told me he thinks his goal-tending is better than Kelowna's because he has two experienced goalies in Scott King and Darryl Dickens. King, who played for Richmond last year and sparkled, is a money player while Dickens has earned Enemark's

respect with his play. Enemark said whichever goalie was hot was the one that would start against Kelowna.

Enemark also told me he had a strategy for playing Kelowna. He named gunner Ward Carlson as a key guy for Kelowna in the playoffs and said he also was working on a plan to control him. He was, however, cagey in his remarks. He admitted he had plans but declined to be more specific. Smart move.

Instead he trotted out the old cliches about needing to play 60 minutes of disciplined hockey against Kelowna in order to win. Making the most of scoring opportunities was important, Enemark said so was staying out of the penalty box. Boring stuff but true, I suppose.

Just for the record the playoff dates are as follows: March 4 in Kelowna, March 5 in Vernon, March 7 in Kelowna, March 8 in Vernon, March 9 in Kelowna, March 11 in Vernon, and March 12 in Kelowna.

Maybe Enemark has something up his sleeve. I hope so. Still, a little controversy and intensity would have made it a lot more interesting.

There are other questions that must be asked: Is what Romeo said correct? Is Enemark a quitter? Will his club fold its tent when the going gets tough? Only the players have the answers to those questions.

Come playoff time the talking will be all done. It will be a chance for the Lakers to take those words and shove them right down Romeo's throat. I'd even buy a ticket to see that.