



KNIGHTS WIN GAME ONE

Penticton Knights' defenceman Marc Rousseau (5) puts the hold on forward Glen Kehrer of South Winnipeg Blues during action at Penticton arena Monday night in the opening game of the Western Canadian Junior A Championship series between Knights and Blues. The teams were tied 1-1 and 2-2 by periods but Knights burst open the floodgates in the third period with six unanswered goals to take an 8-2 victory and a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series. Game

two is tonight in Penticton while the remaining five games will all take place in Winnipeg which means winning the first games is imperative for Knights. Winner of the Western Canadian Championship goes on to the Centennial Cup playoffs in Ontario. Knights are the defending Western Canadian Champs and following Monday's victory look like they could repeat.

(Daily News Photo)

So you think you wanna be a scout?

So you think you'd like to be an NHL scout? Before you dedicate your life to the cause maybe it would be a good idea to try keeping up with Vernon native Ken Holland for a week or two.

Holland accepted a position as talent scout for Detroit Red Wings a year ago after a lengthy hockey career spent mainly in the minor leagues. Players know that in the minor leagues a guy really earns the money he's playing for but, as a full-time talent scout for a major league team, Holland was never prepared for the tough, often lonely life on the road that comes with the territory.

Using Medicine Hat, Alta. as his base for operations, Holland has spent the lengthy junior hockey season driving from Brandon, Man. at the furthest Easterly point of his territory, to Portland Ore. in the West. In between there are dozens and dozens of other stops as the former pro goaltender watches games almost nightly in a half dozen leagues.

His prime concern, of course, is the major junior circuit which is known as the Western Hockey League in this part of the country. From his Alberta location he can cover teams from Brandon, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary, Kamloops, New Westminster, Victoria, Portland, Seattle and Spokane.

Trying to scout the junior talent available on 14 major junior teams may seem like a virtually impossible job in itself, but that's only the tip of the iceberg where Holland is concerned. In between major junior games he also makes his way to the whistle stops on the prairies where the Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta Junior Hockey Leagues of the Canadian Junior A hockey circuit play their games. Of course, there is the B.C. Junior Hockey League as well in addition to the Peace-Cariboo Junior league, though it's unlikely the teams in that loop will get more than a fleeting glance from time to time.

It adds up to more than 50 junior teams added to his major junior interests but the buck doesn't stop there either.

There are also a number of major midget hockey tournaments and playoffs that he must find the time to get to and occasionally he has to find time to make a few appearances in Detroit where he'll see a few Wings' games. While he's in the East, however, he kills two birds with one stone by taking in the Ontario and Quebec major junior leagues and as many junior A games as he can possibly fit into his schedule at the time.

During one span of less than a month, between Dec. 26 and late January of this year, Holland reckons he saw 43 games in 30 days. He doesn't include in that total his stop at the Quebec Cup Midget tournament to watch younger brother Dennis compete and it doesn't include a stop in



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Detroit where he saw two NHL games involving the Wings.

Though he lives in Medicine Hat in the off-season, he's seen more of his native Vernon in the past months than he's seen of his residence in Southern Alberta. That fact doesn't sit too well with Holland, either, since he has a wife and three children in Medicine Hat.

In fact, the toughest aspect he's had to deal with, has been the adjustment from being home a lot while playing hockey, to a point where he's seldom, if ever, at home during the hockey season while he's scouting.

This time of the year is perhaps the worst since it's playoffs in every junior league across the country. Monday night Holland was in Penticton for the opening game of the Western Canadian Junior A Championship. Tonight he'll be in Kamloops for game two of the WHL Western Division final between Portland Winter Hawks and Kamloops Blazers.

All the while he's taking notes on the players who have caught his eye or who have been suggested as possibilities for the amateur draft this June. He'll keep a composite study of the best 250 or so players he's seen and will list them from most desirable to least desirable though he'll constantly upgrade his information and move players up and down the list.

But Holland is already finding out that the job of a talent scout in the NHL is far from easy. At one time it was possible for an NHL club to build a strong team using only the draft but that was when the young men coming out of junior hockey were 20-year-olds.

The amateur players in the June draft nowadays are 18 years of age and under and, unless they are clearly a standout in the sport, there's really no telling if they will improve with time or if they've peaked already.

To make matters doubly worse, Detroit has just completed a virtual disaster of a season in the NHL and the pressure is on the organization's scouting system to find enough talent in the coming years to turn things around. There's also pressure to find players who can help the club immediately.

It's a tough job, it's a lonely job and it's basically a thankless one unless you happen to be the scout who finds the next Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux. But, like they say, as tough as it may be, someone's got to do it. And that someone just happens to be Ken Holland.