

PEPP-JALK

with
Harry
Pepper

For the first time in a number of years the Rossland Men's Curling Club has put everything together to organize a major men's bonspiel. At the last count they had 32 rinks committed for a weekend bonspiel starting tonight at the Rossland Curling club.

Rinks that have stated their intention to be present for the three-day affair are coming from Elkford, Spokane, Vernon, Nelson and Trail to supplement rinks from the host club. The ice this winter has been good and a big weekend of curling is looked forward to.

The men's club has had a lot of bad luck in organizing this sort of 'spiel with conflicting dates and various related foul-ups conniving to put the club behind the eight-ball and it is the sincere hope of this corner that this year will be a big success.

While on the subject of curling clubs the Retirees' club has completed its initial competition and a quick glance at the standings shows that Phil Bateman is going to come out on top of this one. But wait, I have news that Phil lost on Tuesday to Norm Harry so there is now a three-way tie at the top with Angus Popplewell joining Phil and Norm with just one loss each.

Each rink has today's game to play at the time of writing this so anything can happen. Harry meets Russ Broughton, Bateman meets Tommy Harrison while Angus tangles with George Kent and if all win their games there will have to be a playoff.

The Retirees' Club has completed the restructuring of the bar and kitchen facilities in the Arena Lounge. A number of members, with the help of Joe Thalman, got busy the other day and the relocation of the door to the bar was completed; it will afford entry to the bar without going through the kitchen, a move that has been contemplated for some time.

than the three-to-four-hour jobs we've been used to.

Well, the KIJHL season is now old enough to look back on what's happened and see what some of the quirks of fate have done to the fortunes of the Warriors.

I walked to Jim Markle, Rossland's manager, yesterday and he pointed to a number of things that have taken place this season which have not exactly worked to the Warriors' advantage. While this is not to be confused with crying the blues, the record supports all of Jim's arguments; it is a tale of things could have been but didn't quite come off for one reason or another.

First of all, there was the coaching change and we all know that this is not exactly a run-of-the-mill incident. Players take time to adjust to a new mentor and the new coach has to look over his field and come up with the method that will fit the situation.

For my money, Doug Buhr has done a real good job considering that he came in to fill in after the original choice for coach begged off after the exhibition season. Doug has now acquired two assistant coaches in the persons of Doug Hinton and Tim Steinke. We hope this arrangement will have positive results and that it will lessen the load that Buhr has been carrying of late.

Doug has definitely had his problems. Young Tim McNulty, one of the bright prospects after his rookie

season in '78, chose to leave town to seek his fortune elsewhere; Tommy Haley, a gutsy performer if there ever was one, off to a flying start, is out for the season, probably, via a bad injury; John Caron was lost to the team for over a month after a league suspension; Richard Melnyk came back after an injury and was awarded a gross misconduct penalty which forced him to sit out some games, and there were in-club suspensions for training infractions, levied by the coach and the minor sickness problems which have seen the club play shorthanded for many of its games this season.

Two players from the Coast were recruited, came, took a look and kept going. Victor Zanet, a Rossland boy now living at the Coast, came, played one game against Trail, scored a goal and had four assists, but was called home because of sickness in the family. He hopes to return.

In camp at the present time is a plus-200-pound defenceman from Toronto, Ian Douglas by name, Jim says he will help no end but the team hasn't got his card yet. He is working for a local store and it is hoped his eligibility will soon be forthcoming as he has a year or two left in the age bracket.

Add to this the fact that the club had to use the curling club for change rooms until the dressing rooms were complete and you have the picture of a club that's been hard done by.

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I am unable to attend many senior hockey games because of other club commitments, but I shall have to try and fit one in. After following the Smokies via the press and radio and reports from pro-senior fans, I have to believe that the Smokies are definitely the class of the WIHL as the record speaks pretty loud and clear.

One other thing pleases me about the Smokies. I see that Harold Jones didn't lose any time voicing his displeasure with the powers that be who elected to bring in this player change rule for the month of December.

Personally, I'm in agreement with Harold. I think the new rule is going to result in mass confusion and will probably lead to many "too many men on the ice" infractions that will hold up the game rather than speed it up.

I talked with Arnie Sherwood on this and he had one word to describe it, "devastating." There are a number of other things in the handling of hockey games that could be done if the idea is to speed things up. Some of them are the responsibility of the officials, some are caused by the actions of coaches, captains and alternates and a number of times you will see a group of players hanging over the shoulders of the official who is handing out a penalty.

The area of no encroachment in front of the official scorers box should be doubled in size and the rule prohibiting players from entering it should be strictly enforced.

I understand this is a descretion call on the part of the officials and some coaches and captains are taking advantage of it, with the result that the officials spend more time explaining the rules to the players and the games are held up interminably.

Arnie told me that he is instructing his officials to do everything in their power to speed up the game and that he can see that things are beginning to get a little better in the KIJHL games. He said his goal is a two-to-two-and-a-half-hour game and he cited a couple of games in which he officiated that fulfilled that mission. I can only say, "Keep up the good work," it would sure make for a much more satisfying spectacle