

PEPP-TALK

with
Harry
Pepper

Last week, after seeing the Warriors play what I considered to be two of their best games of the waning season against Trail and Castlegar, both lost by 5-4 scores, I thought there was hope that they might continue in that fashion and maybe wind up the season with half-a-dozen wins. However, after the two games on the last weekend against the league-leading Border Bruins and Trail, I'm afraid I'll have to admit it was a somewhat vain hope.

With 10 games left of the season, two of them in the East Kootenay, against Fernie and Cranbrook this weekend, there doesn't appear to be much chance for the local lads to do much to better their somewhat lacklustre record for the season.

The remaining home games, two in January and two in February are against Nelson, Spokane, Trail and Columbia Valley in that order; away, after this trip to the East Kootenay, they play Nelson, Grand Forks twice and Castlegar.

The prospect of a couple of wins in this schedule seems rather remote at the moment. The teams they have to play all have a chance to put themselves in a better position for a play-off spot, so they won't be giving anything away, while Grand Forks and Spokane would have to have a real letdown not to win their respective divisions, the others are all clustered in a group with only a few points separating them.

The two teams to be eliminated from the East division playoffs are not decided by any means as statistics to the year-end show Fernie and Columbia Valley behind by two and six points respectively. However, both have a fighting chance to stay in there.

No such chance exists for the Warriors, sad to relate. The only thing left for our boys is pride in the name of a team which has always been known for its battling qualities.

Over the years the Warriors have never been known to quit, also, they have never been in the hopeless position they are in right now. This is the time when a team shows its real worth and I'm quite confident that these Rossland boys are not going to let us down.

What can you say to a bunch of kids who, with the poorest record in the KIJHL history behind them, are left with only the one thing that they have done well over the year, put up the kind of a game which the fans have always enjoyed, top notch entertainment.

The Warriors have provided that even in these adverse times and that's what the fans expect. It would be nice if there had been more fans to enjoy it, because, after all there are always two teams on the ice and 60 minutes of hair-raising activity which keeps one on edge all the time.

I have heard that there is talk going round that the Warriors will have to fold. This kind of talk can only be generated by people who think negatively. Look at it this way, what else have we got in Rossland if we let this happen? Look at the years Nelson and Grand Forks suffered in this league before rebounding with over-all excellent teams. Rossland can do it too with what we have now and with the kids they have coming up, the only fly in the ointment is, they have to have better support from the fans to make it pay.

So, what do you say? Let's stay with it and support the kids for the rest of the season and hope for a better break from the fates in 1980-81.

I am going to get a chance to go over to see the visiting under-18 Czech team play the Border Bruins tonight in Grand Forks. The Bruins will be the first Junior B team in the west to tackle this team who have a winning record against WHL teams.

This will be a stern test for the Bruins who have probably the best all-round team in the KIJHL this season. They have some big boys and some not so big but over-all they are all pretty manoeuvrable; one kid on the team, Craig Redmond, really impressed the Rossland fans in his last game here, #4 on defence. I'm told the big league scouts are paying close attention to the young fellow's activities. He really does look good.

Moving up to the big leagues, the Canucks are having a rather miserable time of it on the road this time around. They started on the wrong foot in St. Louis and have not been doing that good since. What once looked like a real good season and a possible division championship, now looks like becoming a battle to survive to the playoffs. Since only the division winner gets an automatic pass to the playoffs, the Canucks will sure have to bolster their points total to have any chance of making it into the final play-off group. The passing off of Sedlbauer to Chicago didn't exactly help them either; watching him play for the Hawks against Montreal last Saturday, I thought he looked pretty good.

And the Flyers string finally ran out. I guess it had to happen some time but they are still going to be hard to knock out of the race for the Stanley Cup. Scotty Bowman's Sabres could be the ones to do it, but don't count on it.

Wouldn't it be something if the Pittsburgh Penguins won that Norris division which has always been the property of the Canadiens. It could put them in a position to make it three in a row for Pittsburgh, baseball, football and hockey, all in one season. Of course I'm assuming that the Steelers will beat L.A. Rams in Super Bowl XIV.

That's it for this week, then. See you!