

AS I SEE IT

WITH

HARRY PEPPER

Having had my first look at the East Kootenay representatives in the B.C. Junior "B" Playoffs I feel safe in making the following prediction.

Any team in the West Kootenay Junior Hockey League that hopes to take the Cranbrook Colts in a best-of-five series will have to pull up their socks.

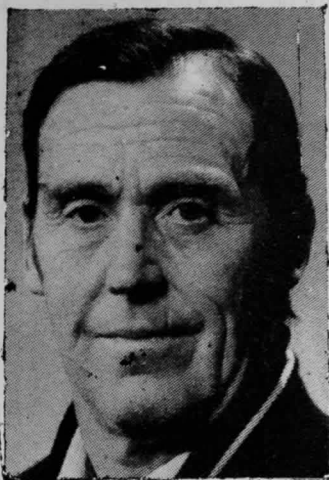
This Cranbrook squad is a good young hockey team, smart, smooth skating, particularly good at puck control and fore-checking and very well coached.

Coach Colin Patterson seems to be to have his boys under excellent control and the boys seem to reciprocate by playing according to his direction and by going all-out, all the time.

Derek Spring, Keith Hebert, Les Dowd, Rod Faust and John Dixon all played impressively for the Colts against the Warriors on Saturday, and I understand that Patterson had to leave a few of his stars at home for this trip, guys like George Fargher and Tom Rennie, who, I am told, are pretty good hockey players too.

At full strength this would be a pretty formidable foe to face in the play-offs come spring, and this is what the young Warriors will have to face if and when they wrap up this league championship.

The Warriors, too, were shorthanded, as Jim Stuart did not dress for the contest and I believe that the Warriors missed him. When a coach must juggle players to make up three lines, with a key player missing, against a powerhouse like Cranbrook, it's like being backed into a corner, with no way out.



all they can muster if they are to get past the strong Cranbrook team.

I don't feel that winning this league is going to be too great a strain on the Warriors' abilities, but every game from now on down the stretch will have to be played as if they were playing against the Colts.

Three things stood out in my estimation of the game on Saturday night.

First, the all-round excellence of the Cranbrook team, to me it seemed they didn't have any obvious weaknesses.

Secondly, I've sniped at referees before, and I shall continue to do so as long as I consider they have it coming to them.

Saturday, I took exception to one or two things on which I thought the referees were in error, but mainly I have been distressed with the continued inconsistency of the refereeing in a number of games this Winter.

The fellows who officiate in this and other leagues in this area all have to pass tests to show their capability, and I believe they are reasonably well-paid for their efforts. In little room for the sometimes glaring inconsistencies we see in almost every game.

This was the last exhibition against the Colts, the next time the Warriors will have the chance to face these East Kootenay boys will be come playoff time, and it would appear that everything the Warriors do for the rest of the schedule should point towards fitting themselves to take this playoff when the time comes.

All three of the Warrior lines are as good as any in the league and the 5 rear-guards are also among the best, when they are up to par. Goaltending has not been up to par in recent games, but the talent is there.

Saturday night, despite the fact he was scored on 11 times, Lorne Kinakin certainly could not be faulted for the defeat. Had he not been on, the score could have been doubled, the way Cranbrook put men in position, and the way they fore-checked Lorne was really under the gun, and he came through in fine style.

The excellent work which Doug Davis and Jim Cotton have done this season has been one of the highlights of the locals performance. Shorthanded, Coach Lloyd had to use Davis on the front line, which I feel weakened the defence to the extent it was off balance most of the time.

With the lines of Jones and the two Stanton boys and Evans, Bertoia and Savinkoff set, Jim Stuart, who has been working between Popoff and Henne on a line, and filling in on power plays, has to be the key to the Warriors success. It leaves Oliver as the fifth defenceman, and with Jones appearing to relish the extra ice time the team would benefit from being able to use a real powerful power play alignment.

One thing is for sure and that is the Warriors will need

Third, and I believe most important, was the absence from the Warrior line-up of Jim Stuart. What his reasons were for not dressing are solely his business. Certainly, I have no reason to pry, but I was asked questions after the game and I could not honestly answer. If Jim has problems I hope they will straighten out, because the team can ill afford to lose a player of his capabilities.

So, Coach Lloyd, I hope as you put it, that you and the boys can put it all together in time for that playoff.