

As lions win first trophy...



Jukka stakes his claim

Deeside Dragons 8
Lee Valley Lions 9

THE Lee Valley Lions won their first trophy on Saturday by beating Deeside in a thrilling encounter in North Wales.

The match was deadlocked at 8-8 with just a minute to go when the Lions hit a dramatic winner to take the Boswell Printing Ice Hockey Challenge Trophy.

And the two stars of the performance were on-trial imports making their first appearances of the season.

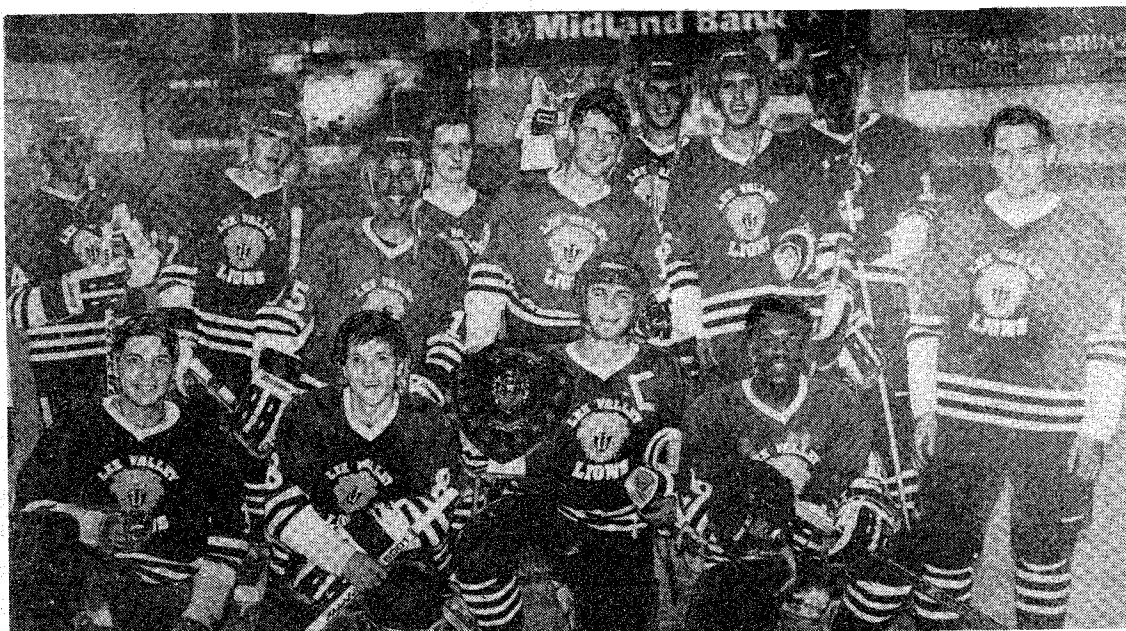
Jukka Krohonen hit four goals, including the late clincher, in a fine performance and goal-minder Richard Steeves earned a special man of the match award for an excellent display to thwart the home side on a number of occasions.

Before this game it seemed the three import places were virtually decided, but the exploits of the 'Flying Finn', Krohonen, and Canadian keeper Steeves have caused a selection headache for coach Dave Wurthman to go with the muscular virus which kept him away from the match.

It was revealed on the way to the game that this was more than just a friendly.

Deeside play for this invitation trophy at the beginning of each season and Lions captain Geoff Williams managed to secure his team's place as the opposition on this occasion.

And it was Williams who lifted the impressive shield at



● THE triumphant Lee Valley Lions with their first trophy at Deeside on Saturday.

the end of this enthralling battle to give the Lions a massive confidence booster just three weeks before they start their first division challenge.

The win was achieved in the absence of the ill Wurthman and manager Mike Smith, who had commitments at Lee Valley.

Paul Newman at Deeside

Lions assistant manager Terry Locks was in charge of the side and on-trial import Bill Watson was set to be bench coach — but Deeside failed to provide any officials so Watson had to step in as referee along with a Deeside player.

And the Lions were unsettled by this late change because they went a goal behind after just 40 seconds when Bernie Butler scored for Deeside.

The Welsh side, in a selection of red and purple shirts and different coloured shorts, were soon put under pressure by the Lions, wearing their green away kit for the first time.

Alan Sandford hit an equaliser and Simon Murray hit a post before Deeside snatched a surprise second through Canadian Danny Walker.

It seemed only a matter of time before the Lions superior hockey skills resulted in goals and they began to show their best form to lead 4-3 at the end of the first period.

Dave Rapley made it two after he combined well with Krohonen, and Alan Sandford hit the third after good work from Will Fish.

The Flying Finn, who scored goals consistently when he played against the Lions for Richmond and the London All Stars last season, scored his first goal of the match after linking once again with Rapley, but Joel kept Deeside's hopes alive with a strike seconds before the end of the period.

By the end of the second period the result seemed safe for the Lions as they powered to a 7-4 lead despite some crude tactics from Deeside

which included blatant use of elbows and constant tripping.

Krohonen slipped a fine goal past the Deeside keeper and Dave Petrie hit a long range effort into the net before Walker scored for the home side in this scruffy ice rink, which hasn't recovered fully from a fire two years ago.

Krohonen was growing in confidence by now and he raced the length of the Deeside half of the ice to hit the Lions seventh.

But by no way was this a one-sided contest and Steeves was kept busy and had to make a series of fine stops.

This physiology student, studying at St John's College, Cambridge, is another of those players who distinguished himself against the Lions last season — he won the match for Cambridge virtually single handed on Lee Valley ice.

But he must excel himself even further if he is going to displace Vesa Pennanen, who could well be the best goalkeeper in England at the moment.

The third period started with a fight which involved the Sandford brothers, Alan and Freddie, and the Deeside captain.

It ended with penalties for the Sandfords, but none for any home players and the Lions had to survive with just three outfield players for two minutes.

They did so in superb manner as Steeves, Krohonen, Fish and firstly Rapley and then Williams stopped Deeside from scoring.

And as soon as the Sandfords

returned they combined to make it 8-4, Alan scored the goal and Freddie assisted.

It seemed all over, but Deeside came back cheered on by the home fans to hit an incredible four goals in three minutes to level the scores.

The tension reached fever pitch and a side with less character than the Lions would have let the cock-a-hoop Dragons snatch the game.

But in glorious fashion the Lions roared back cheered on by their loyal band of 16 supporters, who shouted their hearts out in the closing stages.

Williams played a short pass to Krohonen who raced the length of the arena and slotted it home in one of the most exciting finishes in Lee Valley hockey history.

Said a delighted Terry Locks: "It was a very good game, but we rested on our laurels a bit. When we realised they were right back in it we made our superiority count and we showed them how hockey should be played. I was also pleased with the constraint shown by our players when Deeside roughed it up." Locks also mentioned that Deeside's best player, Walker, told him how good it was to see Lee Valley in the League.

This is the third year of the Boswell Trophy. The Trafford Tigers won it in 1982 by beating Deeside, but the Welsh side won it back last year. The Lions will defend it against Deeside at the start of next season.

Said captain Williams: "It was a great honour to lift the Lions' first ever trophy. I hope there'll be many more in the future."

The Lions travel to Bourne-mouth on Sunday.