Corrado’s back, bigger and badder

Jason Botchford – The Province
The team showed faith in the fledgling defenceman and he aims to repay it in full this season

After the Canucks’ “young stars” skated for more than an hour Wednesday, ice shavings piled up in the corners of the South Okanagan Event Centre arena. They looked like piles of foam. Fitting, because a summer of GM Mike Gillis and new coach John Tortorella stressing their need for “young players” like it was an essential food group has left these guys frothing for two months. “I heard it,” said Brendan Gaunce. “There were a lot of people telling me about what (Tortorella) was saying in his press conferences. “It’s a great chance we have.” It sure is. There were 27 players wearing Canucks jerseys on the ice Wednesday. Most will be playing in the Young Stars Classic tournament which begins Thursday.

Some have the three qualities the Canucks are desperate for this season. Those would be cheap, young and promising.

At 20 years old, Frankie Corrado hits all three out of the park. Oh, and he’s a right-handed defenceman. You can add grounded, and heavier too. After an offseason of conditioning the 6-foot-2 blueliner has his frame up over 200 pounds. He played last year at about 188 pounds.

His dreams this year are big. They should be. He started last season a relatively unknown fifth-round draft pick. He ended it averaging 12 minutes a game for the Canucks in the playoffs two months after he turned 20.

Somehow, he managed to follow Chris Tanev’s surprising, and rather exceptional, transition from relative obscurity to the Canucks’ top-six.

“I know Chris really well,” Corrado said. “I know his story really well. I can relate. I think we’re similar guys and similar players.

“It’s nice to have a guy who has been through what I’m going through recently. He can show me the ropes a little bit.”

Corrado played all four of those frustrating post-season games against the San Jose Sharks. The third burned the first year of his three-year entry-level contract because it was his sixth NHL game of the year.
Looking back at the sweep, flushing a year of controlled salary so Corrado could play a couple of playoff games ahead of Keith Ballard sure seems like a mistake.

But the faith the team showed in Corrado sent a clear and direct message to the player.

“It was a compliment. You don’t always need to hear things in words, you see it in actions, like ice time,” Corrado said. “To see something like that happen, it was a good sign to me.

“Those are little things you see in the background.”

Corrado is not competing with any defencemen on his own team here in Penticton. His competition won’t begin until main training camp begins on Sept. 11. Then, he will be up against Andrew Alberts and Yannick Weber. But his biggest obstacle could be the question of whether his overall development would be helped most by a full year in the AHL, rather than playing as a No. 6 defenceman in the NHL.

If that is what’s decided, you won’t be seeing him shedding tears.

“I’m 20 years old, if it doesn’t happen, I’ll go to play for Utica and play hard,” he said. “There is so much time for me. I have time to make a name for myself in the NHL.

“The quicker I can get there, the nicer it would be. But if I need to go get seasoning and play in pressure situations without the big time, big arena pressures, then that’s what I’ll do.”

But just like Gaunce, Corrado has followed everything Tortorella said this summer about wanting young players to push for roster spots.

“It’s great to hear, you just have to show you’re hungry for it,” Corrado said. “I think when he says ‘young players’ he wants guys who are really hungry for it.

“If young guys are hungry and push for it, the older guys have to push harder. It’s sort of a domino effect. I see exactly what he means.

“I know he’s fair. You’ll get what you put it. If you put in a good effort, he’ll see it and you’ll be rewarded.”

Effort is one of those murky hockey terms you’re going to hear a lot from Tortorella.

Not sure how he defines it, but Corrado’s season last year should qualify. There was that stretch in December when Corrado played nine games in 11 days.

He was just fine, by the way. He scored a goal in the ninth.

There was the end of the season, when Corrado found himself playing in the NHL playoffs. Then, he was closing in on 100 games for the season, including some Hockey Canada
scrimmages. He was at his best at the end, too. “At that point of the season, I was playing with a
ton of confidence,” he said. “I had played so many games, and played so well.

“That’s the big thing for me now. How do I get that confidence back? It’s been a whole summer
away from playing games. The quicker I can pick up the swagger I had, the quicker I get back to
that level.

“I feel like it’s something I can do.”

Canucks owner seeks privacy in trial

Susan Lazaruk – The Province

Francesco Aquilini says lawyers are asking for orders to protect confidentiality of family
matters

Days before the start of the Vancouver Canucks owner’s divorce trial, Francesco Aquilini has
asked the court to protect his family’s and company’s privacy during a case that’s expected to
draw much public attention.

“Today my lawyers have filed notice that we are seeking orders to protect the confidentiality of
private family and commercial interests in the course of the divorce trial that starts Monday,
Sept. 9,” according to Aquilini’s first and only tweet in his new Twitter account.

“I am requesting this order to protect my children,” the statement said. “During this trial,
protecting my five children will be at the heart of everything I do relating to both custodial and
financial matters.

“While I can personally withstand the impact of media coverage, it is simply not fair to have my
children exposed to the effects of sensitive family matters being aired this way. I am confident
that my wife, Taliah, would agree that this order is in the best interests of our family.”

Aquilini said the request is “consistent with a decision made by the court” last year, when a
judge approved an order that effectively seals the court file in the divorce proceedings, after his
lawyers argued the family’s commercial interests and privacy rights would be harmed by
disclosure of details.

His lawyers had argued financial information about the NHL team could damage its brand name
and fan loyalty.

His estranged wife, who filed for divorce, alleging infidelity, agreed last year that either side can
designate as confidential any document.
That order also allows either party to apply to the court to unseal documents designated confidential.

The Aquilinis, who married in 1994 and have five children now in their teens, will have the court decide the legal division of family assets, according to B.C.’s Family Relations Act entitling each spouse in a long-term marriage half of all family assets.

Those assets are bound up in the larger Aquilini empire that includes businesses run by his father and two brothers and is estimated at $5 billion.

The family owns the $300-million Vancouver Canucks and Rogers Arena, real estate holdings and farms, as well as the chain of Pizza Hut restaurants.

“Like any other family unable to resolve their differences outside the courtroom, the Aquilinis have turned to the judicial process for assistance,” said Taliah Aquilini’s lawyer, Paul Daltrop, in an emailed statement. “Mrs. Aquilini is confident of a fair trial.”

Lawyers for Aquilini didn’t respond to a request for comment.

[Article about the Aquilinis]

Lack hip to idea of sitting for long stretches as backup

Jason Botchford – The Province

PENTICTON — Eddie Lack begins his chase of an NHL job as a No. 3 goalie on the Canucks prospects team.

In fact, Lack won’t be seeing any action in the tournament this week, and will be watching a lot of Joacim Eriksson, the Swedish goalie the Canucks signed in June to be his competition.

Lack said, at 25-years-old, he was too old to play in this tournament for prospects. But Canucks assistant general manager Lorne Henning said the goalie won’t play because he still hasn’t been medically cleared after hip labrum surgery in January.

The team expects Lack will be ready for main training camp after seven gruelling months of rehab. But even if he is, and he plays this pre-season, it will be nine months between games played.

Eriksson, on the other hand, is expected to be in heavy rotation this week, which may give him an advantage as the two players tumble toward their inevitable battle to spend a lot of time on the bench backing up Roberto Luongo.
Instead of playing games, Lack will be counting on his work this summer in Vancouver and Chicago.

“I was only able to go home to (Sweden) for a week and a half this summer,” Lack said. “I feel like I made sacrifices, not being able to see my family. But it really helped me.”

Lack was hurt in November, but didn’t go to Colorado for his hip procedure until January.

For skaters, the recovery time is usually four to five months. It can be a lot longer for goalies, who put so much more pressure on their hips, going in and out of the butterfly.

And that leads to a pressing question: Why did they wait so long to pull the trigger on Lack’s surgery?

“They wanted to try all possibilities before surgery,” Lack said. “There was an idea I could push through the season, and get the surgery after it.

“That wasn’t possible. We just had to get it done.”

Lack said the recovery after his first surgery was a roller-coaster. He didn’t start skating again until July and spent a lot of the offseason in Chicago working with Stan Dubicki, the Chicago Wolves goaltending coach.

“I wasn’t ready to take shots so we worked every day for an hour and a half to get the movements in,” Lack said. “I have full movement now.

“It hasn’t been easy. You always doubt yourself.”

Along with Dubicki, Lack has also counted on Dan Cloutier, who is now a goaltending consultant with the organization, to help him through the down periods of rehab.

“He went through two of these hip surgeries,” Lack said. “He provided a really good support system.”

Lack believes he’s ready to backup Luongo, a job which is sure to include weeks between starts.

“I haven’t played in (nine) months, I’m sort of used to it,” he quipped.

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**Bo knows history will always be his future**

Elliott Pap – The Vancouver Sun
Mature Horvat accepts being defined by the controversial deal that sent Schneider packing

PENTICTON — Bo Horvat knows he can never be just Bo Horvat, first-round pick. Bo — full name Bowie — knows he will always be Bo Horvat, first-round pick obtained for Cory Schneider. It’s the way it was on draft day and it’s the way it was Wednesday when the Canuck prospects skated together for the first time in preparation for their opening game Thursday at the Young Stars rookie tournament.

It’s also the way it will be forever.

“Oh, definitely, I know it’s always going to be there,” said Horvat. “It’s always going to be mentioned here and there. You try to forget about it, but it’s always going to be in the back of your mind, of course. I’ve been asked about it quite a few times. It’s the way it is, the way of the hockey world.”

Horvat isn’t a goalie, of course. He plays centre and one day he might be the Canucks’ No. 1 centre. He was drafted ninth overall in a strong draft class. He was an elite prospect and was going to be a high pick no matter which team he joined. He just never figured, nor did anybody else, that he would go for Schneider.

“I look at it as a positive,” Horvat said. “They traded up to get me and that means they really wanted me, right? It means they really wanted me and that they have a lot of faith in me. Now I just have to prove to them that they made the right choice. It’s going to be motivating.”

Still 18, Horvat seems mature beyond his years. His media scrum Wednesday in Penticton was large and only figures to become larger once he advances to main camp. He handled it with ease. Hopefully for the Canucks, he will handle opposing defencemen in similar fashion. There wasn’t a question that had him flustered.

“I have had lots of experience dealing with the media and lots of help along the way,” he said. “I hear it’s quite a whirlwind in Vancouver when everyone comes in there and everyone is kind of on top of you. But I know it’s part of the game and I’ve wanted this ever since I was a little kid.

“So, definitely, it’s going to be overwhelming. I’m going to have to deal with it and I’m kind of looking forward to it, actually.”

Horvat, who signed with the Canucks a month ago, will skate Thursday night against San Jose on a line with fellow 2013 first-round pick Hunter Shinkaruk. It will be his first outing as a pro. He still has two years of junior eligibility remaining, however. If he does go back, he is guaranteed to play in the 2014 Memorial Cup with his London Knights serving as host team.

“Whatever happens happens,” said the six-foot, 206-pound Horvat.

“You have the best of the best prospects here and everyone is fighting for a spot and trying to prove themselves. It’s really exciting and a little nerve-racking, of course.”
There is really only one gaping hole on the Canuck roster this season and it happens to be at the third-line centre position, unless career fourth-liner Brad Richardson rises above his station to claim it. Otherwise, Horvat, fellow prospect Brendan Gaunce, and freeagent signee Mike Santorelli will be competing for the spot.

Horvat understands a good showing in Penticton will be a baby step toward that goal.

“You try not to think about it too much, but it’s always in the back of your mind,” he said.

Utica Comets coach Travis Green, who is running the prospects camp, knows a bit about Bo. He coached against him in last spring’s Memorial Cup, won by Halifax, and then kept a watchful eye on him during Wednesday’s practice.

“I think everyone knows he’s a good, young player,” Green commented. “He brings a little bit of everything to the table. He’s strong on his skates and he’s a smart hockey player. You know you’re going to be able to rely on him to play at both ends of the rink. He’ll be a power play guy and a penalty-kill guy. He’s still young, but I see him being a real good NHLer down the road.”

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**Eriksson has a bigger goal in mind, even if first stop is in Utica**

Elliott Pap – The Vancouver Sun

He even thought about Utica, N. Y., home to the Vancouver Canucks’ new American Hockey League farm team.

PENTICTON — After helping Skelleftea win the Swedish Elite League title last season, goaltender Joacim Eriksson thought about moving up in the hockey universe.

“I want to play at as high a level as possible,” he explained Wednesday. “I want to take the next step in my career and play in the NHL. I’m very excited to be here. When the Canucks wanted me to come here, my stomach said that it felt very good. I am OK if I have to start in Utica.”

At 23, Eriksson has no experience on the smaller North American ice, which puts him three seasons behind Eddie Lack, the favourite to claim the backup spot to Roberto Luongo. Eriksson is also on a two-way contract while Lack is on a one-way, so the odds are against him — unless, of course, he performs brilliantly. He’ll play in Thursday night’s Young Stars opener against the San Jose Sharks prospects.

“The small ice is a little bit different and you have to be ready all the time,” he said. “They shoot faster here than back home in Sweden. I have only been in one camp on North American ice, but I know you always have to be ready.”
Eriksson did a little research on Vancouver before coming over. His assistant coach in Skelleftea was Bert Robertsson, a rugged defenceman who played 69 games for the Canucks from 1997-99. Robertsson was drafted 254th overall by the Canucks in 1993.

FEELING ABLE: Vancouver Giants left-winger Cain Franson doesn’t have the pedigree of first-round picks Bo Horvat and Hunter Shinkaruk. He was never drafted and isn’t signed to a contract, just a tryout agreement. But he was on the ice Wednesday in Penticton with every other Canuck prospect trying to make an impression.

“There are a lot of good players here and the pace was a lot quicker than it is in junior,” said Franson, 20. “I feel like I held my own out there. I was a little nervous going into it and it felt good to get the first one out of the way. It was a good, hard practice and a lot of learning.”

Franson said he was not told whether he would be in Thursday’s lineup for the first of four rookie games.

The Canucks also play Friday (Flames), Sunday (Oilers) and Monday (Jets). SUBBAN SPARKLES: Utica Comets coach Travis Green is running the prospects camp from ice level and was impressed with Jordan Subban’s first practice. Subban, the younger and smaller brother of Norris Trophy winner P. K. Subban, is also a puck-moving defenceman. Jordan is listed at 5-foot-9 and 175 pounds.

“I liked what I saw of him today,” noted Green. “He brought a lot of energy. He’s a good skater and it looks like he wants to be an offensive guy. You need players like that on the back end. You need to push the pace and get pucks up ice.” QUOTABLE: “We want to get Eriksson in there as much as possible and see where it goes.” — Travis Green on the playing time he expects to give goalie Joacim Eriksson at the Young Stars tournament.