

Pucksters move closer to clinching WCIHL top spot

Deciding game set for Stampede City Saturday

By Bob Anderson

Manitoba 2, Bears 4
Winnipeg 2, Bears 8

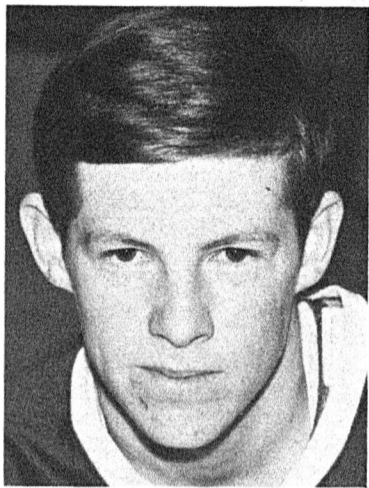
The somewhat hazy Western Canada Intercollegiate Hockey League picture was brought into clear focus within the space of a few short hours at the weekend.

And the Golden Bears are happy with what they see.

Whereas playoff pairings and league standings were in doubt before weekend action, only first place now remains to be decided.

The Bruins assured themselves of playing on home ice for at least their semi-final round against Manitoba by slapping the Bisons 4-2 Friday night, and hammering Winnipeg Wesmen 8-2 24 hours later.

First place will be decided this Saturday in Calgary as Bears and



Tom Devaney
... big weekend

Dinosaurs meet in the final game of the season. Alberta is 11-2 and Calgary 10-3, but a win for the southerners would give them first place by virtue of a better goals for and against record.

Calgary meets UBC in the other semi-final round in Calgary. The Thunderbirds slid into

fourth place by edging Brandon 5-4.

The Bears knew that they were in full control of their own destiny and took the opportunity to post their second win in as many games against both Manitoba and the Wesmen.

Brian McDonald's gang has now won four in a row and has come out winners in the three "must" games that they have played during the season.

The Devaney brothers, Tom and Bob, continued their goal-scoring splurge. Bob, in his first season with the Bears, potted four, including three against Winnipeg, while three-year veteran Tom notched two. Bill Clarke, the centre on the line, also had a big weekend, picking up a goal and seven assists.

There was not much doubt in the minds of the 3,100 fans who witnessed the Manitoba contest as to who was the better club. Although Bisons may have held a territorial edge, it was the Albertans who came out on top where it counts—on the scoreboard.

The Devaneys had the Bears out in front 2-0 after the opening period and goals by Oliver Morris and Clarke upped the bulge to 4-0 after 40 minutes. Two goals by Bisons' Bill Ramsay, both on long drives from the point past a screened Dale Halterman, ended the scoring.

Holton shaky

Larry Holton, who had been leading WCIHL goaltenders for most of the season, looked shaky on two of the Bear goals, but twice kicked out what appeared to be sure goals by Morris. He finished up with 38 saves, five less than Halterman, who handcuffed the Bisons 3-2 in Winnipeg a week ago.

Against goaltender Grant Clay and the Wesmen, the Albertans ran up a 5-0 lead before the Winnipeggers could get untracked. The improving Wesmen, who failed to win in 20 games last year and who had nipped Calgary 2-1 the night before, were no match for the Bears who played their best game of the season as a team.

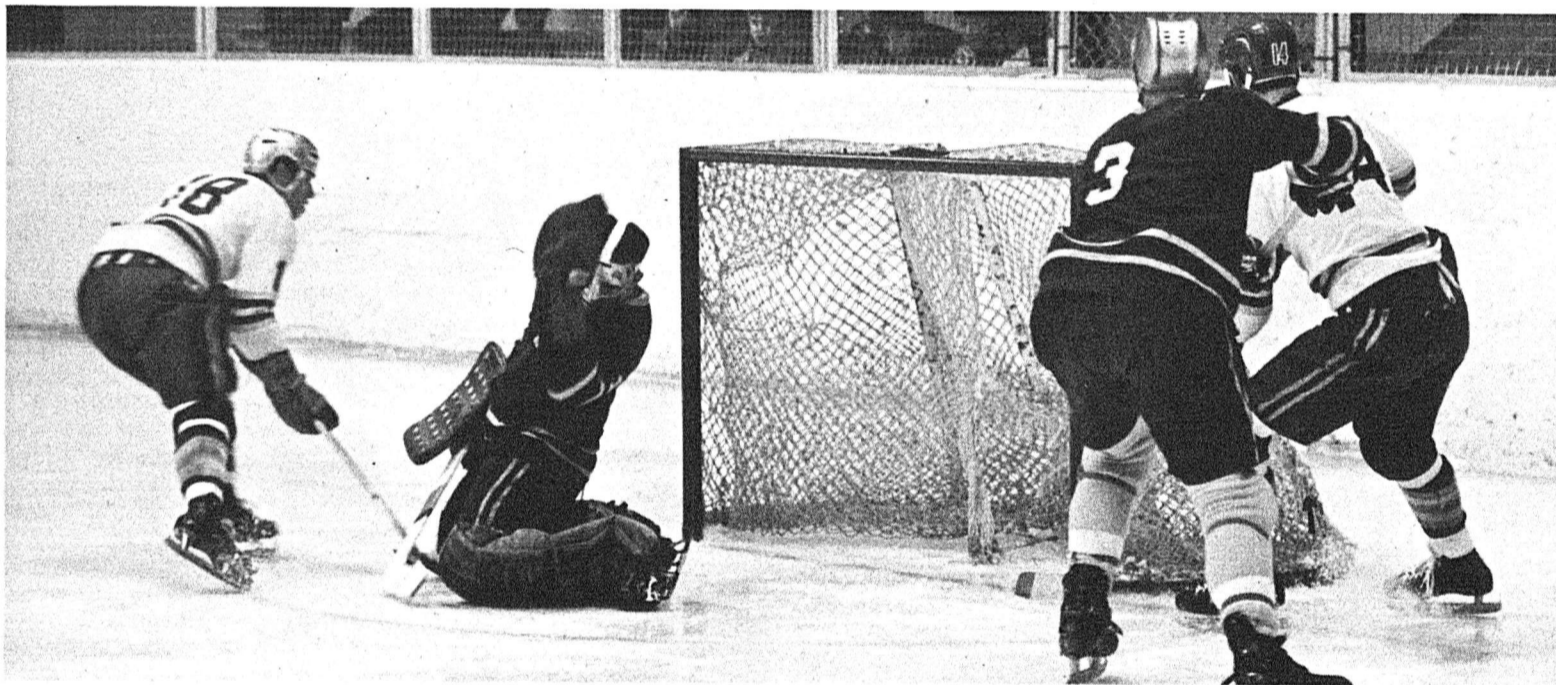
Besides Bob Devaney with his

three, Tom Devaney and Sam Belcourt fired two each, while Jack Gibson got the other. Ron Allard and Joe Fras were the only Wesmen to beat Bob Wolfe in the game played before 2,700 on-lookers.

McDonald got fine performances from newcomers Dave Couves, Harvey Poon and George Repka, inserted into the lineup because of the suspensions to Milt Hohol and Al Cameron and Gerry Braunberger's knee injury. Repka and Poon were employed effectively when close checking was the strategy while Couves took a regular turn between Morris and Don Falkenberg.

WCIHL standings

	W	L	F	A	Pts.
Alberta	11	2	72	35	22
Calgary	10	3	83	41	20
Manitoba	8	5	90	44	16
UBC	7	6	73	55	14
Brandon	7	7	70	56	14
Sask.	5	7	48	49	10
Winnipeg	4	9	36	75	8
Victoria	0	13	21	137	0



BEARS' BOB DEVANEY (18)
OPENS SCORING AGAINST
MANITOBA

... after perfect pass from
Jack Gibson (14)

—Chuck Lyall photo

Before the current hockey season began, Bear coach Brian McDonald realized that he had a big pair of shoes to fill.

Replacing Clare (Super Coach) Drake would be no mean task, despite all the talent that the club appeared to possess.

Well, today, after 13/14 of the season has been completed, McDonald has done an admirable job in filling those shoes. His club, after a shaky start, has turned it on to the point where they now find first place entirely within the realm of possibility, if not probability.

The rookie mentor was criticized earlier on in the season in this space for the performance of the club but failed to press the panic button.

In fact, McDonald's whole theory of coaching is to take things in their stride. Thus the cool attitude back in November when the club was winning, but looking unimpressive.

"The whole secret of coaching a hockey club," he said at the time, "is



Bob Anderson ... one man's opinion

not to bring it to a peak too early. Sure, I'm not pleased with the way we're playing, but there's a long way to go before the season's finished."

It was easy at the time for this writer to shrug off the words as being just another excuse, but in the months that have followed McDonald appears to have proven himself to be a shrewd prophet.

For the club has put it all together at just the right time what with league playoffs and the possibility of the Canadian championships just around the corner.

Key wins in recent games, particularly against the Manitoba Bisons, have left the club in an ideal position

to cop top spot and home ice in the WCIHL finals, should the Bears get by the Bisons in semi-final action.

In effect, the whole season boils down to the crucial game this Saturday in Calgary. Bears must win, because if the Dinnies post a victory, they will be awarded top spot on the basis of a better goals for and against average.

The club really started to jell in Winnipeg two weeks ago. Consecutive wins over the Bisons and Winnipeg Wesmen, coupled with a Calgary loss put the club alone on top. Then Calgary was edged Friday by the Wesmen in the biggest upset of

the year to put the Albertans farther ahead.

The Bison and Wesmen conquests were also a moral victory for McDonald and the club in the light of the recent suspensions handed Milt Hohol and Al Cameron. Brian was forced to go with replacements Harvey Poon, George Repka and Dave Couves and all three came up with honest efforts.

"I was real happy with the play of the new guys," he said following the games. "Couves played well, and both George and Harvey checked well whenever I sent them out there."

Team morale was at a higher level than at any time this season, and more than one player commented that the club was starting to play as a unit, something lacking up until now.

They say the weather is fairly nice in Charlottetown during the first week in March. The Bears may just get the chance to find that fact out for themselves.