

Bears split and leave first

by Shaune Impey

Look back. Waaaayyy back. When was the last time the Golden Bears' hockey team were not in first place in the Canada West hockey standings?

For the first time in four years the Green and Gold slipped out of top spot as they split a pair of weekend contests with the Saskatchewan Huskies while the homestanding Calgary Dinosaurs were sweeping their series against the UBC T'birds.

The Bears skated to a 7-4 victory on Friday night, but they couldn't get untracked Saturday and fell behind 4-0 after two periods. They had a third period rally fall short, collecting only two goals to eventually come out on the short end by a 4-2 count.

The biggest problem with coach Bill Moore's Bears was the inability to string together three solid periods of hockey in one game. On Friday evening the Bears jumped into an early 3-0 lead after twenty minutes only to allow the Huskies to get right back in the game by getting outscored 4-2 in the middle stanza. They pulled up their socks, however, and netted two unanswered tallies in the third period for the victory.

Saturday's game started out well for the Huskies as they turned the tables on the Bears and skated to a 3-0 lead after one period. All three came against starter Brad Hall, who then pulled himself, Ted Poplawski, who had gone all the way the night, replaced Hall. Saskatchewan upped the lead to 4-0 after forty minutes and eventually won 4-2.

Friday night's game had the Greg Skoreyko-Joel Elliott-Ace

Brimacombe line leading the way as they picked up ten points, including four goals. Skoreyko snapped out of a scoring slump with a goal and four assists, Elliott scored twice and added one helper while Brimacombe helped set up one of Elliott's tally and found time to put the puck past goaltender Gary Smith once as well. The Bears also got goals from Jim Lomas, Terry Lescisin and Barrie "Big Train" Stafford.

Although the Bears were outshot 47-31, most of the Husky attack was directed in the middle period, when they had a 16-6 advantage. The Bears' real heroes throughout the first two periods were the penalty killers as they weathered seven Husky powerplays, including three occasions when they were two men short, and allowed only one goal.

The Bears proved much more successful on the powerplay, as they scored three times in their seven advantages.

In Saturday's game, the Bears couldn't beat Doug Senyk in the Husky net until early in the third period. Brimacombe and Stafford then tallied eighty-four seconds apart, beginning at the 3:52 mark for the only Alberta markers.

Coach Dave King said his team "hasn't had many high points this year and I'm glad we didn't take the old gas pipe again," in reference to the victory over the Bears.

For the Huskies, however, with a 7-12 record, their playoff hopes along with those of the T'birds are virtually non-existent.

Bears' assistant coach Peter Esdale, reflecting on the contest, said "It's tough to win hockey

games when you only play one period. This game reinforces what we talk about in regards to consistency."

For any team consistency is what coaches seem to talk about more than anything else. While it is difficult for any athletic squad to maintain a perpetually high degree of performance, it is even tougher with a young and inexperienced team like the Bears. And when the team is missing its number one defenceman and two all star forwards the task is toughened immensely.

The Golden Bears are without captain Larry Riggan who is suffering from an eye injury which occurred in Vancouver last weekend. He is still questionable for the upcoming series Saturday and Sunday afternoon against UBC.

Also missing is fourth year man Mike Broadfoot, out for the year with a shoulder separation. The Bears will also be without the services of Chris Helland, who suffered cartilage damage in the first game against Saskatchewan and is gone for as many as four weeks.

Now is the time for the fans to really get behind the Bears as they fight for first place and the opportunity to host the Canada West playoffs. As evidenced by the large and boisterous crowd in Saskatoon this past weekend, fan support can bring out the best in a team.

In its heyday, Varsity Rink used to rock with the best of them as the fans cheered on stars of the past such as Jim Ofrim, Steve McKnight and Rick Peterson. These days the fans (the few that come) spend more time sitting on their hands than clapping them.



Brad Hall keeps fine puck collection in net.

And where is the Fifth Heday Hate Club. The FHHC has deserted ship these past two years along with most university students.

The time has come, however. Fan support can help the Bears regain first place! For the most exciting hockey in town drop by Varsity Rink Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. to see the Bears take on the high scoring UBC T'birds. Admission is free for students with I.D. cards.

BEAR FACTS

Jerry Bancks scored six goals in the Calgary wins this weekend.

Chris Helland is the Bears' leading scorer and third in the league.

Danny Arndt was back in action against the Huskies, however the lack of playing time was apparent as his conditioning and timing were not in top form.

The Nose is coming. See Thursday's paper.

photo Brad Keith

Pandas must: Start anew

by Karl Wilberg

The Panda's gymnastic team, last year's national champion, had problems at the Calgary Invitational meet last Saturday. However, their difficulties did not lie with standings but more in missing some group goals. Still, in spite of a third place and an inexperienced team, the Panda's future is not bleak.

Coach Sandy O'Brien says a number of changes have had to be made this year. The Pandas usually "have three or four good gymnasts" with a lengthy club background, but this year lost many. In addition, remaining experienced competitors have been injured. The team now consists mainly of gymnasts building a background of expertise.

Still, O'Brien emphasises the new Pandas are "learning a lot" and since Christmas have been "putting on the pressure" in training. However, O'Brien does not expect the new gymnasts to "make up for 10 or 15 years" of coaching in a few months.

Calgary won the meet and Scottsdale, from Arizona was second. The Pandas' best result was a seventh by Noreen Skoreyko and the other U of A athletes filled out the top fifteen. Generally, O'Brien believes the team did not have a good meet.

Still, progress is apparent and O'Brien mentions results early this season do not indicate

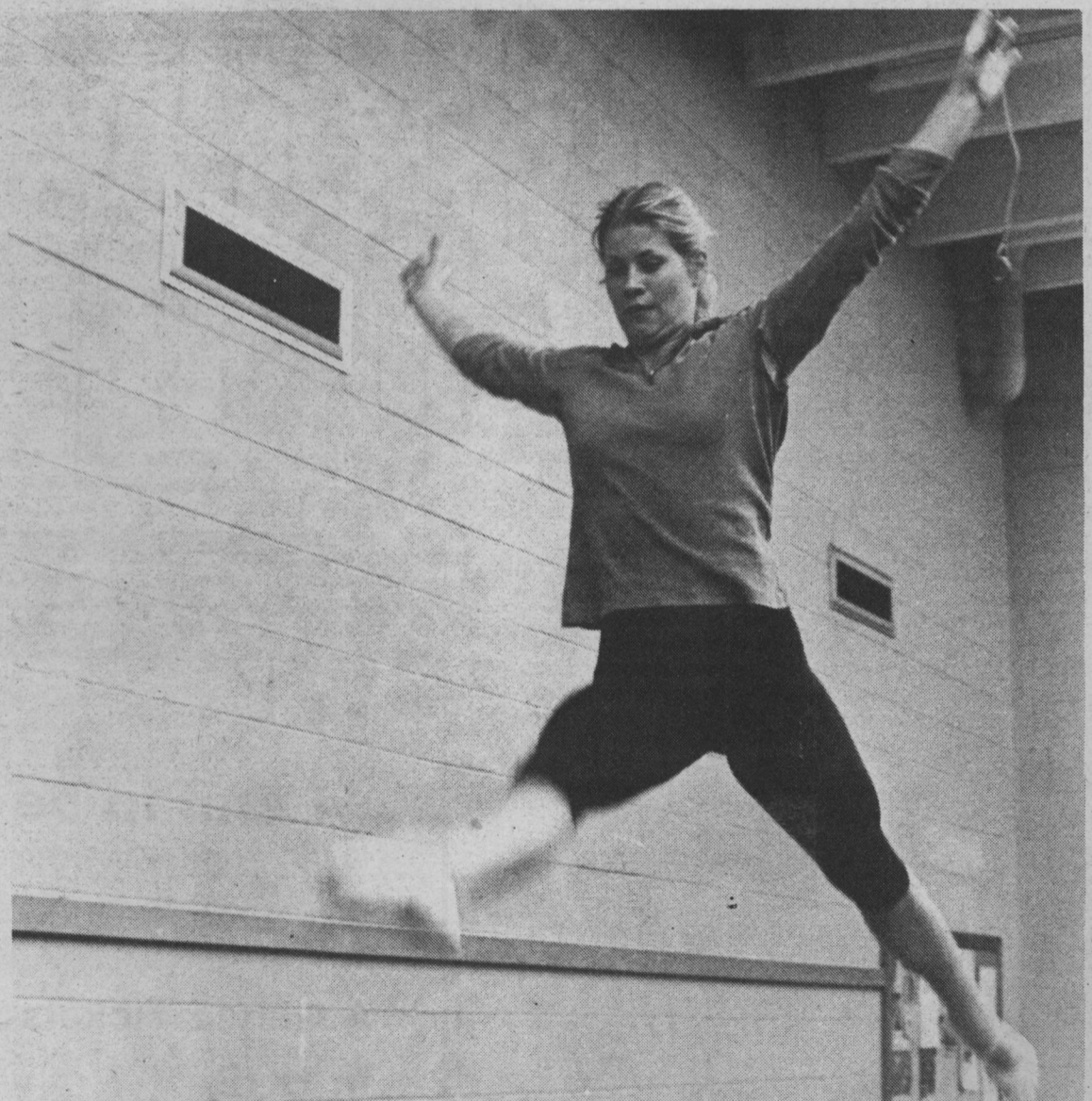
the Pandas are "not good athletes .. just they are not as skilled" yet in the sport. O'Brien states two of the best athletes, Skoreyko and Audry Gee may be able to qualify for national championships.

Again as in previous years, the Pandas are developing depth. Now O'Brien states the quality of performance is lower than last year. Results are down three points in each event. However, once technical skill develops O'Brien hopes to "have quality as well as depth." Consequently, she believes "next year looks favorable."

For this season the Pandas have set group goals. One goal was to keep team balance beam falls to about three. O'Brien says the U of A squad "went home disappointed because they didn't meet the goals." O'Brien adds beam routines were "lacking in difficulty" and reduced the value of performances. However, according to O'Brien, the judges were impressed with the team's improvement since a warm-up meet in November.

Also, O'Brien points out Carol Brinkhurst, Trish Macmillan, and Karen Bailey were not taken to the meet. The three are among the most experienced, particularly Macmillan who may make the national finals.

The short winter competitive season means O'Brien must work intensively to choreograph and polish routines. In addition, O'Brien has to



Trish Macmillan, one of the few veteran Pandas, can defy gravity.

plan for about 15 gymnasts. The task is tougher this year because of the Panda's inexperience. Still, O'Brien has never cut anyone and tries to give many gymnasts the "opportunity to go into meets."

The Pandas have a long history of winners and the answer must lie in the program. The atmosphere of encouragement is able to bring the best out of any competitor, even those with little experience. O'Brien

sets realistic goals and avoids frustration. Success is not necessarily far off and the team's enthusiasm will likely carry for some time. Consequently, the Pandas will be tough to ignore in future CIAU competition.

photo Brad Keith