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CIAU U of A's ball and chain

by Mark Spector

"It's the week of the hockey nationals," I said to myself. "Better write a column."

So, what to write?

The question is, what not to write?

At a time when the University of Alberta Athletics department needs all the positive press it can get, even an undertaker with a ditch witch couldn't dig up much good to say regarding this tournament.

And as if they need the help, their landlord of sorts, the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union, has been losing credibility hand over fist lately. Right now, trying to sell the CIAU in Edmonton is like trying to sell Kiev grown vegetables in Finland.

Sorry, not right now. No, really, we're not interested.

GO AWAY, DAMMIT!

When the CIAU failed to even look at the basketball Bears as a wildcard team for last weekend's nationals, everyone from these parts took their turn slamming the CIAU. Even some of the same folks that will be organizing the hockey championships took their shots.

Then came the announcement Monday morning that Calgary, who was ranked first for the last six weeks of the season, will watch while Western comes west as a wildcard. Hey, they were ranked second for three weeks. So what if the team that they finished second behind (York lost to basically half of the Dino's 'A' team in a Christmas tournament).

"I have no idea," said Dale Schulha, the Alberta Marketing man responsible for turning a profit this weekend. "We're trying to build credibility and consistency... It makes it pretty tough," he said of the CIAU's decision.

Clare Drake agrees: "It really doesn't help the credibility of the rankings," he understates.

What I can't understand, though, is how these four guys (two newspaper men, an Athletic Director, and a conference employee), can come out and say "O.K. We were wrong all year long about Calgary. They really aren't very good." Couldn't have been the scribes.

That's like Victor Kiam — the guy who was so impressed he bought the shaver company — shifting over to Neet, saying, "I changed my mind."

If that was the only problem involved here, Athletics would be ecstatic.

Their ticket packages, by all available reports, are selling poorly. As far as coverage in the two local papers go (no, not *The Gateway* and *The Strathconian*), with the Golden Bears playing possibly their first two games at 8:30 p.m., they can expect shorter stories sans quotes, and definitely no pictures. Deadlines, men, deadlines.

That's O.K. though. If the *Sun's* and *Journal's* deadlines are stretched a little for the Bears, they'll just fill the extra space with game stories from the Oilers/Flames home-and-home Thursday and Friday.

I'll be at the tourney; it's my job. Terry Jones, Cam Cole, et al will be watching the big leagues, though.

And perhaps that's exactly what the CIAU and Athletics should do a little more of.

Watching the big leagues. And learning.

Dinos down in a blaze as Western gets wildcard

"FIXED AND CORRUPT!"

by Mark Spector

"It was fixed."

That quote, readers, comes directly from a man named Jack Neumann, who serves as Sports Information Director for the University of Calgary. "We were tipped off. I fully admit that we lost it on the ice," he says of the Dinos' Canada West finals loss to Saskatchewan. "But we knew since the beginning of February that if we didn't win it on the ice we'd never make it (to the nationals)."

It's only logical, right? You don't win the big game and you pack it in for the season. Simple.

But what about when you play in a league where there's a wildcard spot to the championships for one team that supposedly deserves it? What about if your team, in the same ranking system done by the same four people that vote on the wildcard, was ranked second for the first two weeks of the season, then first for the next six weeks in a row?

And the team that they give the berth to was ranked number 8, 8, 9, 7, 7, 2, 2, throughout the year?

"When you have people making the rankings based on self-interest and ego..." said Neumann. "I'm very disappointed. They knew damn well that they weren't going to pick three teams from Canada West," he said referring to the fact that Saskatchewan and the Golden Bears are in the six team tourney as Canada West champs and hosts respectively.

"The whole thing is fixed and corrupt," Neumann deadpanned.

"We knew all along that this was going to happen. We knew it since February." And a long look at the rankings makes the whole situation look very fishy — premeditated, if

you will. Let's go back.

The weekend of February 7th and 8th when Calgary, ranked first, plays the second game of a home and home with unranked, but third place in the CWUAA, Alberta. After losing 7-3 the previous Wednesday in Edmonton, the Dinos fall 8-3 at home Friday night.

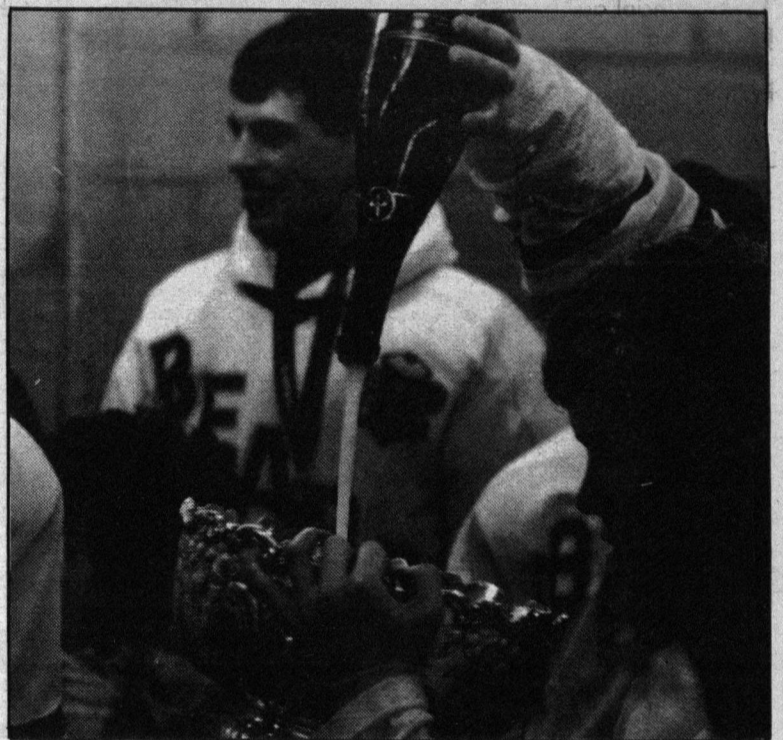
Meanwhile out east, Western wallops last place Laurentian 8-5 and 9-2. When the rankings come out Monday morning, Western has jumped from 7th to 2nd, while Calgary doesn't drop a notch. But here's where it gets interesting.

After knocking off the best team in Canada in two handy wins, Alberta remains unranked. "They wouldn't rank Alberta that weekend, you figure out why," says Neumann.

Because if Alberta gets ranked they represent the second Canada West team in the top ten. With five OUAA teams in that week, the balance would be upset. If Calgary is the only ranked team in their league, they must be playing against inferior competition. Therefore, they're not worthy of a wildcard later on in the year.

John McConachie, the CIAU Director of Marketing and Public Relations, who chairs the wildcard panel of four but does not vote, was not available for comment. His phone rang off the hook Monday. The U of C Athletic department held a press conference that afternoon at which they reportedly ripped the CIAU to pieces.

Here at Alberta, they're hurting as well, but in the worst place — the wallet. A sizable contingent of Calgarians who had planned a Flames/Dinos excursion for the weekend will be staying at home now. And the ticket situation (as is the norm



Will the Bears' Craig Dill be pouring again this year?

photo Bruce Gardave

in these parts) is grave.

"I guess they figured that Calgary was beaten by an unranked team in their final while Western was beaten by York," said Bears' coach Clare Drake, who expressed disappointment that the Dinos were shunned.

Drake's Bears, defending champs, find themselves in Pool B along with the only other returnees from last year, York and Trois Rivieres. UPEI, Saskatchewan, and Western make up Pool A.

Ironically (or perhaps characteristically of the CIAU) Pool A is like a second division in comparison to Pool B. Figures.

"I would have ranked York num-

ber one and Three Rivers second," said Drake. "Look at the pools," said Neumann. "They don't want Alberta to win it either." As it stands, the number one, three, and sixth clubs are in B, while two, four, and five are in A.

With the Golden Bears basketball team just recently getting the short end of the wildcard stick (they feel), CIAU bashing is stylish here in Edmonton. With what has gone on in hockey, it seems due.

"I wish all the luck in the world to Alberta and Saskatchewan," said Neumann. "I hope they meet in the final, that'll mean victory for Canada West."



The Golden Bears' opening game goes Thursday night at 8:30. It'll be a rematch of last year's championship game against the Patriotes from Trois Rivieres. Alberta won last year by a 5-2 score.

photo Bruce Gardave