

Oiler rookies first test for Bears

Ten Bears gone from last year's club

by Alan Small

It would be a good bet to buy a program if you are going to the hockey game between the Bears and the Edmonton Oilers rookies Wednesday night. What the Bears will put on the ice will be far different than the veteran-laden club they had last season.

Ten players from last season's club will be spending their winters elsewhere. Besides graduates Dave Otto, Todd Stokowski, Jack Patrick, and netminder Darren Turner, six players from last year's squad will be playing professional hockey in different parts of the world.

Two of them have signed contracts with NHL clubs: Bret Walter has signed with the New York Rangers (who chose him in the second round of the 1986 amateur draft), and defenceman Brent Severyn has signed with the Quebec Nordiques. Severyn was a Canada West all-star defenceman last winter.

Four others have gone to Europe: last year's captain Dennis Cranston and left winger Jeff Helland will play in the second and third divisions in West Germany respectively, while CIAU all-star Parie Proft will play in the



Grinding it out

Bear Sid Cranston (left) gets taken out by a West German from play last year. Cranston should provide the Bears with much needed scoring punch in the 1988-89 campaign.

sophomore Adam Morrison.

The goaltending looks to be in good shape, with veteran netminders John Krill and Blair MacGregor returning.

"We won't have the experienced depth like we had last year," said Bear head coach Clare Drake, who returns for his 28th season behind the bench at Varsity Arena.

Drake said that the loss of the graduating players to professional clubs is great for the reputation of the U of A hockey program.

"This way, someone can progress toward a degree and work on his hockey skills at the same time," Drake said. "The degree is number one, but if the player has the commitment to hockey, he could go on."

In last year's game with the

Bears, the Oiler rookies were comprised mainly of draft picks, as past number one picks Kim Issel and Scott Metcalfe (now with Buffalo) played the exhibition game. If things remain the same, expect to see both Oiler first rounders in the lineup Wednesday: Edmonton's pick Francois Leroux and the first rounder that came in the Wayne Gretzky deal, Martin Gelinas.

BLUE LINES: Wednesday's game starts at 7 pm at Varsity Arena...Another of last year's Bears, Dan Wiebe, is getting a look at the rookie camp of the Quebec Nordiques. Drake expects him back soon, and he will be glad. Wiebe's 6'4" frame and good skating ability was starting to make a difference among the Bear forwards, in the little playing time the freshman got last season.

"We won't have the experienced depth like we had last year." — Drake

Austrian first division. Finally, Curtis Brandolini will play in Italy this winter.

The Bears however will still be a potent scoring machine for this season. Canada West points record holder Sid Cranston, who scored 80 points in 28 conference games, returns to anchor the offence, while the goal scoring will also depend on forward Wes Craig, Stacey Wakabayashi, and

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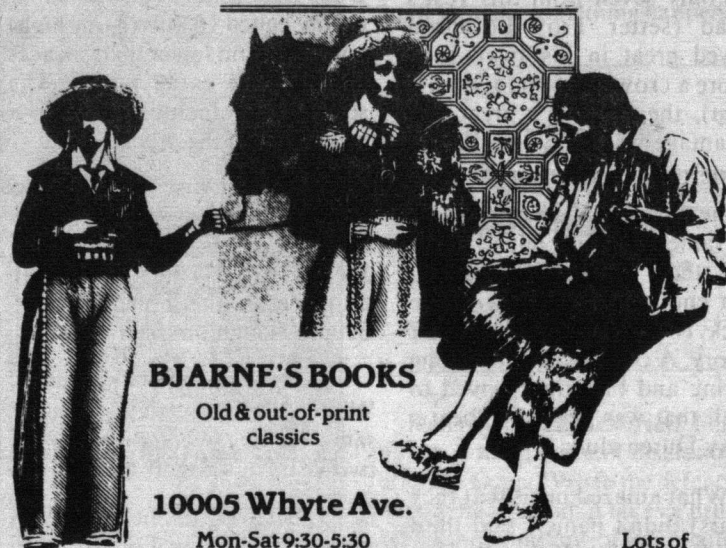
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