

SPORTS

Grid Bears finish on upswing

by Cam Cole

Bears 31 - UBC 16

If it is possible for one victory to make up for all the disappointments in a season of ups and downs, then the Golden Bears' 31-16 upset of UBC in Vancouver Saturday has all the qualifications.

It seems almost heretical to describe any Bears victory over the Thunderbirds as an upset, since the T-Birds haven't won even one from Alberta in the past nine years, but the Vancouverites had to be favored Saturday. Not only were they the only club in the WIFL to beat both the top two teams, Calgary and Saskatchewan (they stomped the Huskies 43-20), but they were wrapping up their most successful season in eons before an appreciative home crowd.

Add to that the skeletal 28-man game roster of the visiting Bears, and the task of defeating the periodically explosive Thunderbirds (who had 52 bodies in uniform for the game) seemed more remote than ever.

But defeat them they did, and in such fine fashion as to inspire coach Jim Donlevy to deliver his semi-annual "This is the greatest bunch of guys I ever had the pleasure..." address almost before the final gun sounded.

More than any other triumph this year, the final game was won by a team.

It was a day when the players in their last game as Golden Bears shone the brightest of all:

- Mike MacLeod, the graduating five-year offensive lineman, was outstanding in the pit as well as on special teams, and was clearly the team leader on the field (and off).
- Dalton Smarsh, after seeing his 1000-yard season go out the window when he had his bell rung against Calgary two weeks ago, very nearly got it back as he plowed for 184 yards on 27 carries, and two touchdowns.
- Brian Fryer had one of his finest afternoons of a starry season, catching 9 passes for 154 yards, punting well, and picking up two touchdowns of his own.
- Graduating middle safety Garry Widynowski led a stubborn Alberta pass defence against UBC's aerial circus, allowing BC quarterback Dan Smith to complete less than half of a staggering total of 40 pass



MacLeod (above) and Widynowski



attempts.

But the old men didn't do all the work. Rookie pivot Brian Larsen called a strong game, connected on 12 of 18 passes for 165 yards and one touchdown; Rod Diduch, seeing his most action of the season at linebacker, blocked two punts - both led to good scoring opportunities, one led to a major score.

Middle and outside linebackers Dennis Blond and Brian Towne were murder against the run, and Blond recovered both blocked kicks.

To complete the picture, it was perhaps the Bears' oft-maligned offensive and defensive lines who controlled the game.

The "Hogs" opened up Bears' running game for a total of 299 yards, while the defence held UBC's 1000-yard back Gordon Penn to 85 yards, and the T-Birds as a team to 124 yards on the ground.

Five minutes into the opening quarter, BC's Gary Metz

kicked a 30-yard field goal to give the Birds a 3-0 lead, but Alberta's Dennis Holowaychuk gave Bears good field position moments later when he returned a punt from his own 15 yard line to the BC 33. Five plays later, Smarsh scored from a yard out, and Joe Poplawski added the convert to put Alberta up 7-3.

Alberta stretched their lead to 11 points early in the second quarter, when Fryer took a pitch out from Larsen and sprinted 39 yards for a touchdown, which Poplawski converted.

The first of Diduch's blocked punts eventually resulted in an Alberta first down at the BC 3, but a fumbled snap snuffed out the scoring chance. T-Birds, however, were unable to move the ball from deep in their zone, and had to punt the ball away. Bears got possession with just time enough for one play before the half, and made the most of it, as Poplawski hit for three points from 33 yards out.

Blocked punt #2, moments into the second half, led to Smarsh's second touchdown, from 3 yards out, and Poplawski's convert made it 24-3 for the Bears.

Then, the Green and Gold's only defensive lapse for a period of just over three minutes late in the third quarter allowed two UBC majors, with a successful short kickoff in between.

Several costly penalties, some of them questionable, cost Alberta on the first of those scoring drives, which culminated in a one-yard touchdown on a broken play by quarterback Smith.

The short kickoff gave BC the ball right back again, and this time they required only six plays to score, ending with a 5-yard toss to tight end Evan Jones, who represented the T-Birds' only effective offence all afternoon.

With less than two minutes left, and the Bears in possession at their own 38, Larsen dumped a pass into the middle to Fryer, which the fleet flanker turned into a 72-yard touchdown ramble, leaving no less than six BC defenders lying in his wake.

It was Bears' final scoring play, and a perfectly natural end to the season.

It was, says Donlevy, "one of the most enjoyable seasons of coaching football I've ever had."

"Certainly you always like to do better, as far as the win-loss record goes, than we did this year, but I feel that there are teams in the league that didn't do as well with the personnel they had as we did with ours."

"It takes time for young players to learn to play together...but they just kept on getting better with every game. Brian Larsen matured beautifully. I only wish the game he called against UBC was the first game of the season."

A lot of teams, when they realize they are out of the running will get down - the practices are lousy, players skip practices. But this team kept on going, wanting to win till the very last practise."

And it showed on the field.

cole's notes

Bears are endangered species

Between players quitting and injuries, the Golden Bears hockey team is down to the barest essentials in the way of bench strength.

Injured players include center Bruce Crawford (tendonitis), rearguard Randy Gregg (ankle), and winger Dale Fischer (shoulder). Fischer will likely see some action in Vancouver against the UBC Thunderbirds this weekend.

Meanwhile John Horcoff's eligibility is still up in the air, and he won't dress until it's settled. To top it off, two players quit during the exhibition schedule.

Actually, the quitting craze started back in training camp with the departure of Rick Wyrozub, who has more or less perfected the technique. Then, depending on whom you talk to, Steve Lockwood either quit or was cut following the intrasquad game.

More recently, defenceman Gary Natrass quit because of a combination of Med school woes, personal troubles, and not enough ice time.

The latest to pack his bags is sophomore Randy Lemay, who felt that, as a veteran, he wasn't getting a fair shot at a starting job.

The exodus via hurts and retirements leaves coach Leon Abbott with 3 goalies, 4 defencemen, and 12 forwards including Fischer, who won't be 100% for a while.

That makes 19 healthy bodies, and 18 will probably make the trek to Vancouver - not a lot of choices for the coach to make.

The situation is just the reverse of the early part of last season, when Alberta went into Thunderbird Arena completely healthy, to play a UBC club which started the season hurting, and never hit their stride until after Christmas.

Intercollegiate Co-ordinator Chuck Moser deserves long overdue congratulations for the hard work he has put into pre-game, between periods, halftime, and post-game entertainment at campus sporting events.

"Chuckles" is nothing if not enthusiastic, and shows up in the programs he organizes. If memory serves correctly, some of the acts he's arranged over the past couple of years include:

- parachutists flying in the game ball at Varsity Stadium
- a trampoline display by a gymnast at Varsity Arena
- the Golden Bear Dune Buggy
- a gymnastic show at a basketball game
- a talented (and not hard to look at) figure skater
- a police dog demonstration
- at least three different marching bands
- GUBA (of course) complete with specialized paraphernalia for every sport
- the resurrection of the Cheer Squad
- balloon races (weekly progress reports on the location of the balloons are still filtering in)
- thirteen-legged races
- post-game socials for season ticket holders
- and, of course, Moser's grand coup - the signing of Rick Leblanc, organist extraordinaire to play for first hockey and now basketball games. In fact, it took Leblanc's keyboard antics during the Canadian Championships last spring to lure the Journal's sports columnist to Varsity Arena. While watching Leblanc, he happened to notice that there was something happening on the ice, and it was in this way that the great populace learned, in one paragraph or less, that Golden Bears were playing the best hockey in town (Anyone who watched the Oilers on the tube Tuesday won't argue the point.)

For that revelation alone, we thank you, Chuck.

Amazin' Pandas still are

by Darrell Semenuk

The red hot U of A Pandas came up with another string of victories over the weekend, this time capturing the Bisonette tournament held in Winnipeg with a 55-52 victory over the U of Sask. Huskiettes. Amanda Holloway led the way with 18 points. Pandas came from behind by 7 at the half to take their second crown in two weekends.

Pandas knocked off Regina (63-41), Manitoba (60-57) and Simon Fraser 63-57 to reach the final. Although one Phys. Ed. administrator suggested that the team members should undergo saliva tests to discover a possible solution for their play this year, the Pandas have shown that they're a team to be reckoned with.

Coach Debbie Shogan insists miracle drugs aren't the answer to the team's performance. "Their heads are set the right way now," she says. "I think we're on our way."



Pandas will get their first acid test in league play this weekend when they take on the always strong UBC squad. Game time for the Friday and Saturday night encounters is 7:00 p.m.

fridays

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