

# NAIT blueliner, AJHL Rookie of the Year, among hopefuls

by Blaine Ostapovich

It's hard to believe that hockey season is upon us, but phone the neighbours and wake the kids, the boys on the pond are back. The Golden Bears, last season's CIAU Champions, open their training camp today, and while the rookies begin practicing immediately, the vets are scheduled to report this Saturday.

Fourteen veterans will be in camp for coach Clare Drake's club, including both goaltenders from a year ago. And the all-time winningest coach in North American college hockey history figures that this season the Canada West conference will be more than just close. "I think our league is going to be more competitive this year. Five teams in the league, including ourselves, are going to be very tough, while the other three teams

are going to be very close also."

Looking back at last season, Drake figures that the winning of a championship will hang over a few heads this season. "It is kind of a nice after-glow, but I think it puts pressure on you because of the way things happened last season... For 4/5 of the year we had a tremendous won/lost record, and then we petered and sputted towards the end and had that unfortunate loss to Saskatchewan in the playoffs. Then we had to re-group and come back."

If anything, that comeback should put pressure squarely on the shoulders of the rookies trying to crack the lineup. Last year's club overcame adversity, and that intangible just may sway an opinion or two come decision day.

Those who are looking for permanent work with the Green and

Gold include:

**Dean Clark...** he played with N.A.I.T. last season and is a former Oiler draft pick. He is a defenseman, and there may be a few openings on the blueline because of a shortage of veterans at that position.

**Brent Severin...** a Western Hockey League vet, he played last season in Seattle.

**Rob Glasgow...** last year's A.J.H.L. Rookie of the Year.

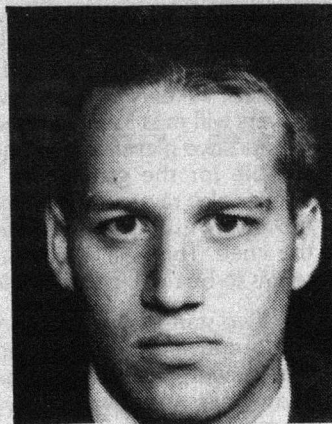
Traditionally, there have been many bodies in camp, with the rookies keeping to themselves until the final cuts. This season, with no Junior pre-season tournament, there may be even more intra-squad affairs. This should make for a lively camp and the Bears look for a combination that will parlay them another national title.

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tally and physically as I should have. I thought I'd be good enough."

Bears' assistant coach Dan Syrotuik feels outside pressure had a detrimental effect on the young running back.

"In his first year he was a freshman phenomena. He played on blind enthusiasm. But the second year was a little tougher psychologically — it tested his ability to handle success," said Syrotuik.



Jeff Funtasz

Determined to put memories of the past season behind him, Funtasz began a conditioning program that, in the words of Bears' Head Coach Jim Donlevy, "... has set the tone for off-season preparation."

Under the direction of Syr-

otuiik, Funtasz began a three times weekly conditioning program. Since January he's missed only two sessions. He has also done some serious running and has recently been rewarded with a 4.5 time in the 40.

This training paid off when the team came to camp during the last week in August. Funtasz was running as well as he did in his freshman year, maybe better. His plans for the season, however, were temporarily sidetracked on the last day of camp. During the intra-squad game, he cut upfield on a run and partially tore a hamstring in his leg. The injury forced him to sit for the first week of practice and miss the Bears' season opener at UBC last Saturday. Although running backs Mark Brus and Tom Houg performed well in the game, there's no question the team could use the excellent running skills Funtasz can provide.

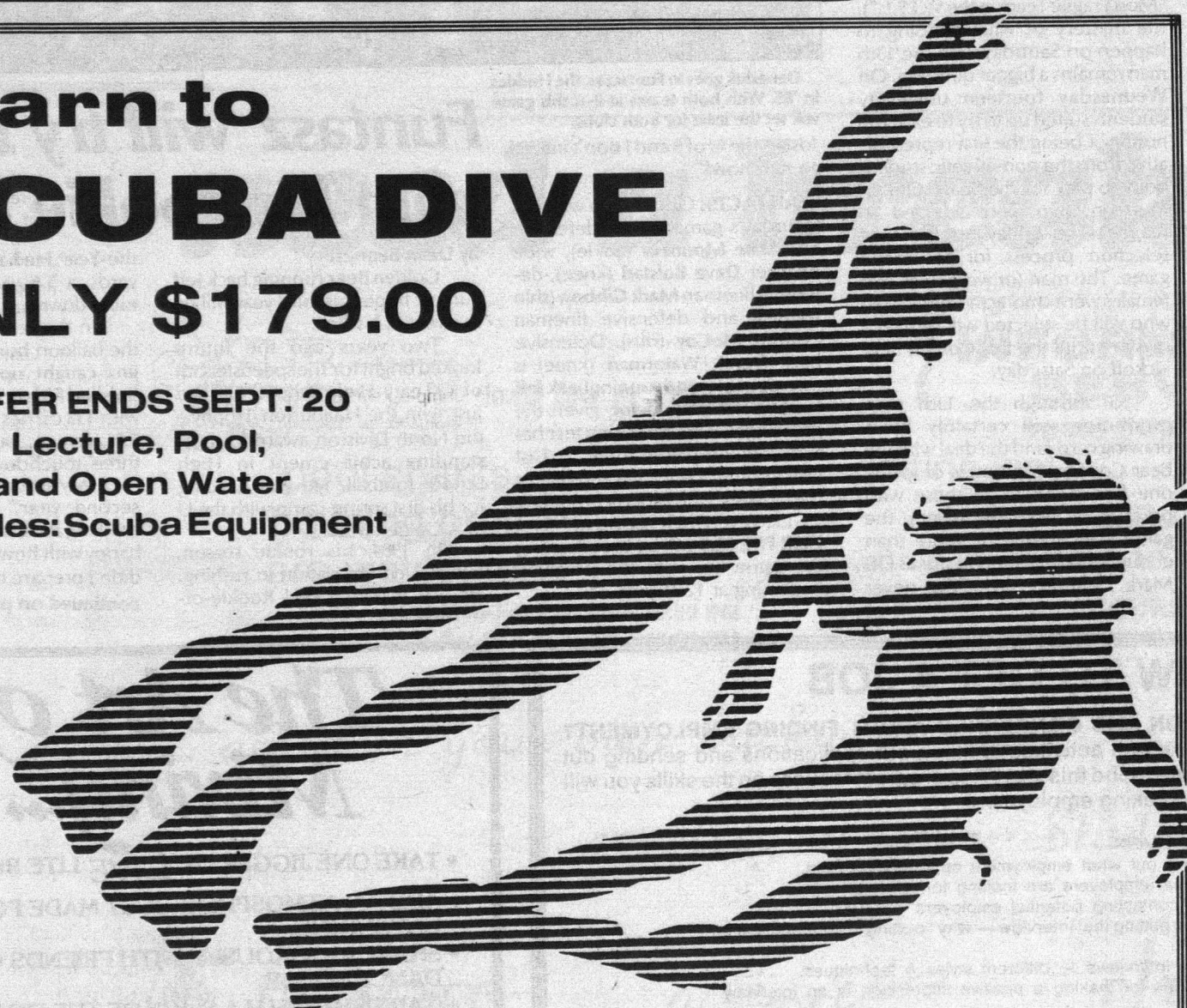
"His running is a combination of breakaway speed and strength," said Syrotuik. "He can pound you one on one or he can beat you fast on the outside."

Performing well in 1986 is very important to Jeff Funtasz. After this season he is eligible for the CFL draft. If drafted, he's definitely ready to go.

"Yes," he said, "I'd like to turn pro next year if I could. I think anybody would want to."

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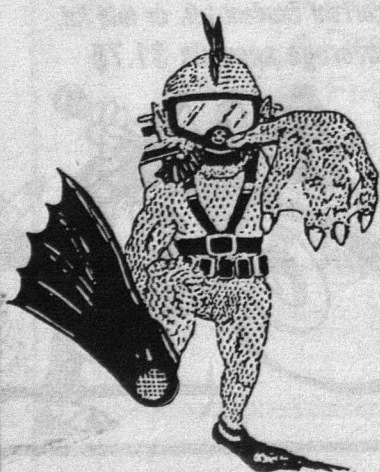
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