

Wrestling Bears win a close one. p. 13



Mark Spector

Oilers may look good

by Mark Spector

So the Oilers finally beat Calgary. Now their slump is over and they will go on to claim the Stanley Cup. And they all lived happily ever after.

Don't kid yourself. The Oilers are still a long way from the level of play that earned them consecutive Cups a couple of years back. But at least they're gaining ground.

Let's go back to November, a time that marked the low point of the Oilers play this year. The '5' in the bell curve of their futility, if you will.

Those that hadn't leaped off of the bandwagon were saying smugly "They've just realized that the regular season is meaningless. Wait until the last third of the schedule when they pull their game together."

Well this column is for all of you, the blindly faithful lot that, should Edmonton's improved play continue, will be spouting I-told-you-so's louder than that Japanese politician who spoke of the sleeping giant.

The facts are that this team is crawling out of a man-sized slump that stems directly from their early playoff exit of a season ago. And if you think that they weren't sweating, and still are to a lesser degree, I've got a snow removal outfit to rent you until next October.

What happens when the best offensive team in hockey suddenly can't move the puck out of their own zone? Or when Jari Kurri, arguably the best possible straight man for Gretzky, can't even match the proverbial fire hydrant's scoring stats, never mind score on a one-timer the way he has done since his days with Jokerit of the Finnish Elite Division?

You tell them.

Or when you can't beat the Calgary Flames — in four tries.

And Sunday's battle was very nearly won by the men in red. It was the same story as last spring. The Oilers all felt that they were playing well except Calgary was leading two nothing after the first period.

And then when Beukeboom scored to thrust Edmonton back into the contest early in the second, Calgary somehow managed to score right after, one of the flukiest goals you'll ever see as Gary Roberts' shot bounded past Moog.

At that point the Oilers were doubting themselves. They'd read this script before.

Maybe Edmonton will regain their championship form just in time to dispose of the hated Flames en route to a third Cup.

And maybe they'll tell us all that they had it planned that way. But they'll be mistaken.

The dressing room Sunday was a cautious place. They realized that Calgary was injury-riddled. They realized that what Calgary had left was very nearly good enough to win in the Coliseum.

And there certainly was no champagne.

Sports

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It was fun while it lasted

Match-up zone spells end to Bears' short turn as no. 1

by Tim Enger

Huskies 82 Bears 73

SASKATOON — Saturday night was an historic night for Alberta basketball — it was the first time in the history of the Golden Bears that they had entered a game ranked number one in the country. But now that ranking seems to be in jeopardy as the Bears dropped their league opener 82-73 at the hands of the U. of Saskatchewan Huskies, much to the delight of the standing room only crowd in Saskatoon.

"I didn't expect to go undefeated in conference play," said head coach Don Horwood. "I'd like it, but our league is too close to go undefeated. Maybe this happening now is a good thing for us. Now we know we have to play tougher and with more confidence to be a factor in this league."

Perhaps the biggest (literally and figuratively) factor in the game was Saskatchewan's 6'8", 258 lbs., two-time All-Canadian center Byron Tokarchuk. Not only did the big guy lead all scorers in the game with 23 points, most of them coming in clutch situations, but he also lead everyone in rebounding and effectively took Alberta's top gun — Mike Suderman — out of the game, limiting him to just five points.

It was obvious that things just weren't going to go the Bears way right from the start as they came out of the gates flat, missed their first eleven shots, and staked the Huskies to a 12-0 lead. To Alberta's credit though, they battled back to tie the game at 15 with 9:20 left in the half, due mostly to the 3-point shooting ability of Cliff Rowein and Chris Toutant, both who had come off the bench.

Unfortunately for the Bears though, that was as close as they were to come, as Huskies' forward Sheldon Ryma (a shoo-in for the All-Ugly team, but makes up in skill what he loses in looks) came right back with six straight points and the Huskies never looked back, leading 38-28 at the half.

The second half started the same way that the first half had ended: with the Dogs dominating, and their lead swelling to as large as 17.

Alberta, forced to counter with an outside shooting barrage since their inside game had been taken away, managed to fight back to within three points of Saskatchewan three times. But each time the Huskies would go to Tokarchuk who either scored or drew a foul (it seemed as if he spent the last four

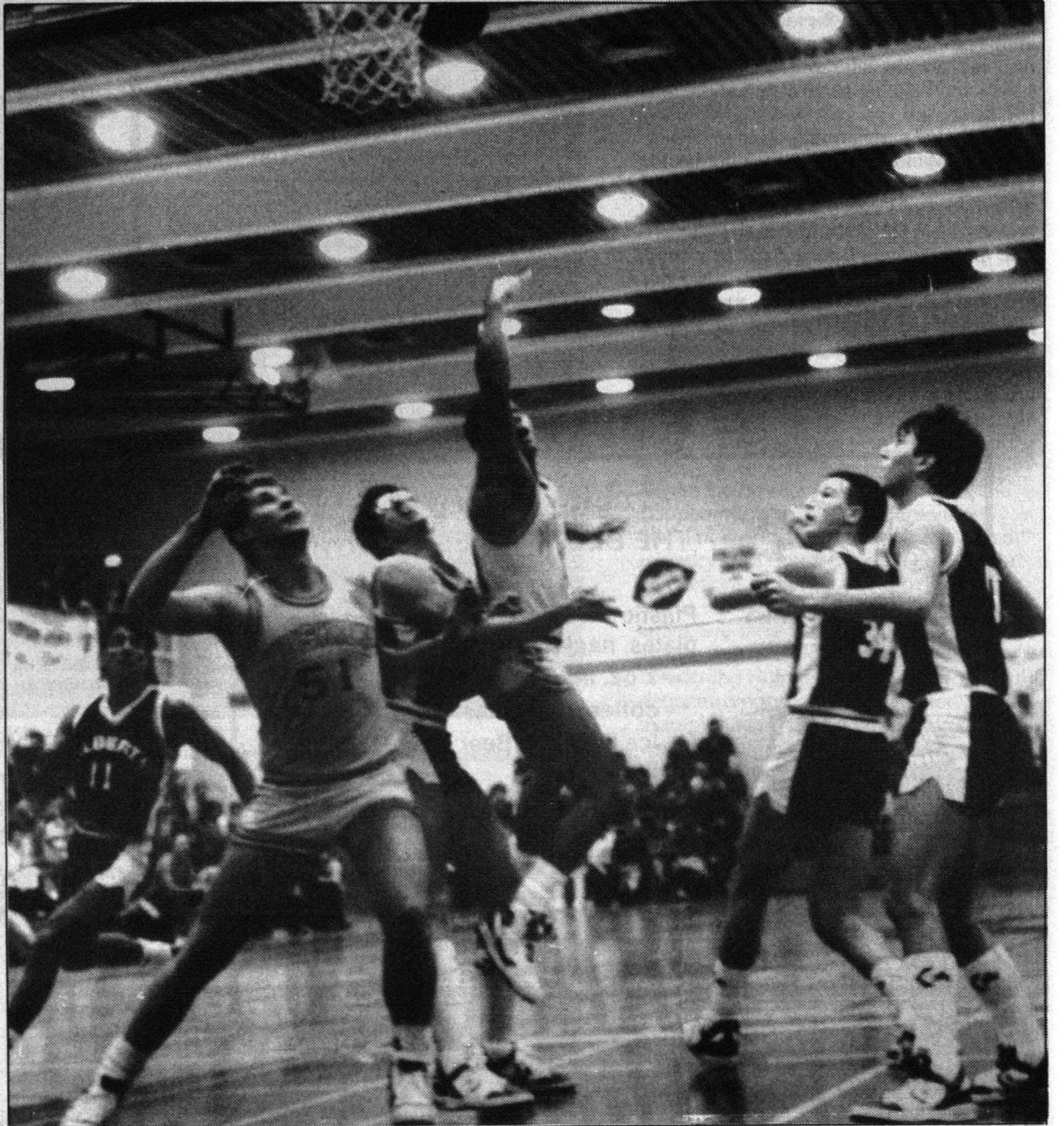


photo by Tim Enger

Bears' Dean Peters watches as a Huskie drives for a layup. Byron Tokarchuk (51) is in position for the board, as he was all night in Saskatchewan's home court victory. Bears play UBC and UVIC this weekend.

minutes of the game on the foul line).

"We really let them play their offense," said post Mike Suderman. "Overall our execution was really poor."

The secret to Saskatchewan's success, other than playing a defensive end at center, was a nifty little thing called a match-up zone.

"You've got to give them credit for showing us that match-up zone," said Alberta's leading scorer Cliff Rowein (19 points). "We had never seen it before and it took us half the game to figure out what it was."

What it was is a zone set up where the defenders play you man to man only when you enter his zone, leaving you to a teammate when you leave the zone. The defense forced the Bears to alter their offense, which isn't what they had in mind at the beginning of the game.

So now the Golden Bears drop from the lofty heights of being number one in the nation to a position they have more familiarity with over the past couple of years: the bottom of the Canada West Conference looking up.

"It's just a matter of being men-

tally tough enough to come back from a loss like that," added coach Horwood, "and I think we have a team that can do that."

IN THE PAINT — Rowein continues to be above 60 per cent from the three point line going 3 for 4 on the day. . . Both Dean Peters and Suderman fouled out of the game for Alberta. . . The Bears open their home schedule next Friday vs. the UBC Thunderbirds at 8:00 at Varsity gym, and then will take on the seven time defending national champion Victoria Vikings the next night same time, same place.

Puck Bears split with UBC — drop to in fourth

by Mark Spector

T-Birds 4 Bears 3
Bears 7 T-Birds 2

The Golden Bears hockey team did exactly what they couldn't afford to do over the weekend in Vancouver. They lost one of two games to the fifth place UBC Thunderbirds, while both Calgary and Manitoba swept their series.

In falling to their lowest position in the Canada West standings since the league expanded to eight teams (4th), Alberta effectually kissed their chances of gaining first place good-bye — without any help that is.

Friday night the Golden Bears outshot UBC 51-20, but lost 4-3 when the 'Birds scored two unanswered goals in the final frame.

On Saturday Alberta finally solved UBC goalie Carl Repp, as Bill Ansell netted two while Jeff Helland had three assists on the way to a lopsided 7-2 victory.

"I think that these were the best two games that we have played back to back," said coach Clare Drake. "Even better than in Regina," he said of a pair of Alberta wins in Regina just before Christmas.

"It is (disappointing)," he said about the loss. "This doesn't help our chances of moving up in the standings."

Parie Proft, fresh from captaining the Canadian entry to the Spengler Cup championship in Davos, Switzerland during Christmas, scored for Alberta in the loss along with Sid Cranston and Craig Dill. Four players scored for UBC in what Drake described as a "letdown in goal," by netminder John Krill.

The next night Stacey Wakabayashi, Bret Walter, Wes Craig, Denis

Leclair, and Proft chipped in singles along with Ansell's pair to bury the T-Birds.

Due to injury and other circumstances, Alberta only was able to take one real goalie along, so forward Craig dressed as backup Friday and defenseman Brent Severyn filled the role on Saturday. Drake allowed Severyn to play for the last 1:48 of the game, and he stopped the only shot that he faced.

Alberta outshot UBC 98-40 in the two games.

(standings on p. 14)