

Golden Bear hoop squad gets intense for season

by Philip Preville

There is a different atmosphere around Don Horwood's basketball training camp this year. Gone are the bona-fide acknowledged all-stars.

Coach Horwood has always insisted that his starting lineup is never sacred and can change from week to week, but last year it was always rather stable. This year, predictions are hard to make. The players know it, too.



"We've had more fistfights around here the past few weeks than a hockey game," says Horwood. "It became a serious problem for a while, but the air has been cleared. The guys are now able to put it behind them. That's the best part; they're good about the whole thing."

"They're good about fistfights? Must be a bunch of special guys. Their intensity level is noticeably high. When the team scrimmages five-on-five, the players who are resting don't sit down.

Bears assistant coach Mark Dobko is excited about the team. "We will be competitive," he says. "We will be really tough on defense and good in transition."

The Bears are very strong at the guard position, where third-year players Sean Chursinoff and David Youngs will almost certainly be the mainstays of this team for the whole year. Backing them is fifth-year sharpshooter Cliff Rowein and freshman Ryan Smith. Chris Toutant can also play guard, adding further depth to this position for Alberta.

Beyond the guards, however, the Bears are full of question marks. The forward and post positions are truly "up for grabs". Toutant's leaping ability makes him a candidate. 6'7" Scott McIntyre was brilliant in 1985-86, but was bumped from the starting lineup last year. Fifth-year player Mark Baker, 6'5", is hungry for a spot. This may be the opportunity for third year players Ed Joseph and Sam Safadi to get some serious playing time. Finally, freshman Brian Halsey (6'6"), Bill Lavergue (6'8"), and Rick Stanley (6'9"), because of their height, could be given an opportunity to play if they can perform in practice.

This year's version of Golden Bears basketball is faced with the same old problem—lack of height. In Canada West, one of the ingredients for success is dominating, effective post man/bruiser. The height factor had much to do with the Bears' demise last year. The

coaches are optimistic that hard work can overcome that disadvantage, but that remains to be seen. Hard work fell short for the #1 ranked Bears last year.

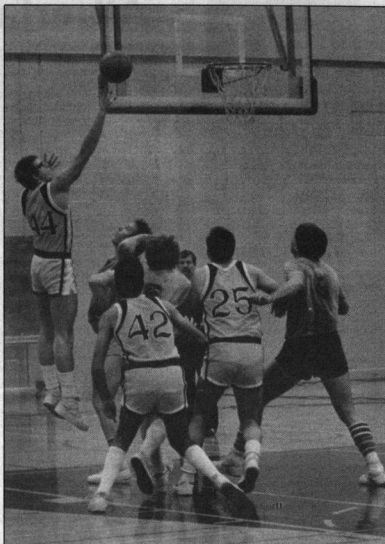
Bear Basketball

The Bears will likely have to battle for a playoff berth this year. The University of Saskatchewan has their whole team returning, and with post Byron Tokarchuk (6'10", 250 pounds of concrete) camping beneath the hoop they will be tough once again. The University of Victoria is happy to welcome back 7-footer Cord Clemens, a national team member. UBC, last year's CWUAA champions, should be a contender once again.

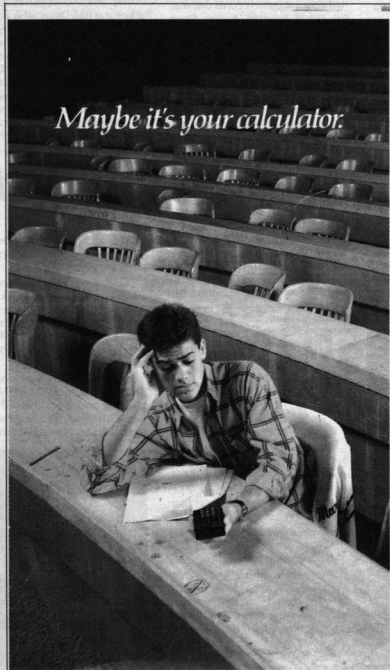
The Bears are young, but they are not short on talent. One of their biggest assets may be the "winning tradition" intangible. The veteran players should be familiar with what it takes to win, and they should also be able to pass that knowledge down. The extended schedule will also give the Bears more time to improve.

BEAR HOOPS:

The Bears go to Grande Prairie College this weekend and then start their conference play against the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns in Lethbridge on October 23 and 24.



Bears basketball squad hopes to leap over their Canada West opposition



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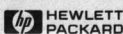
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