

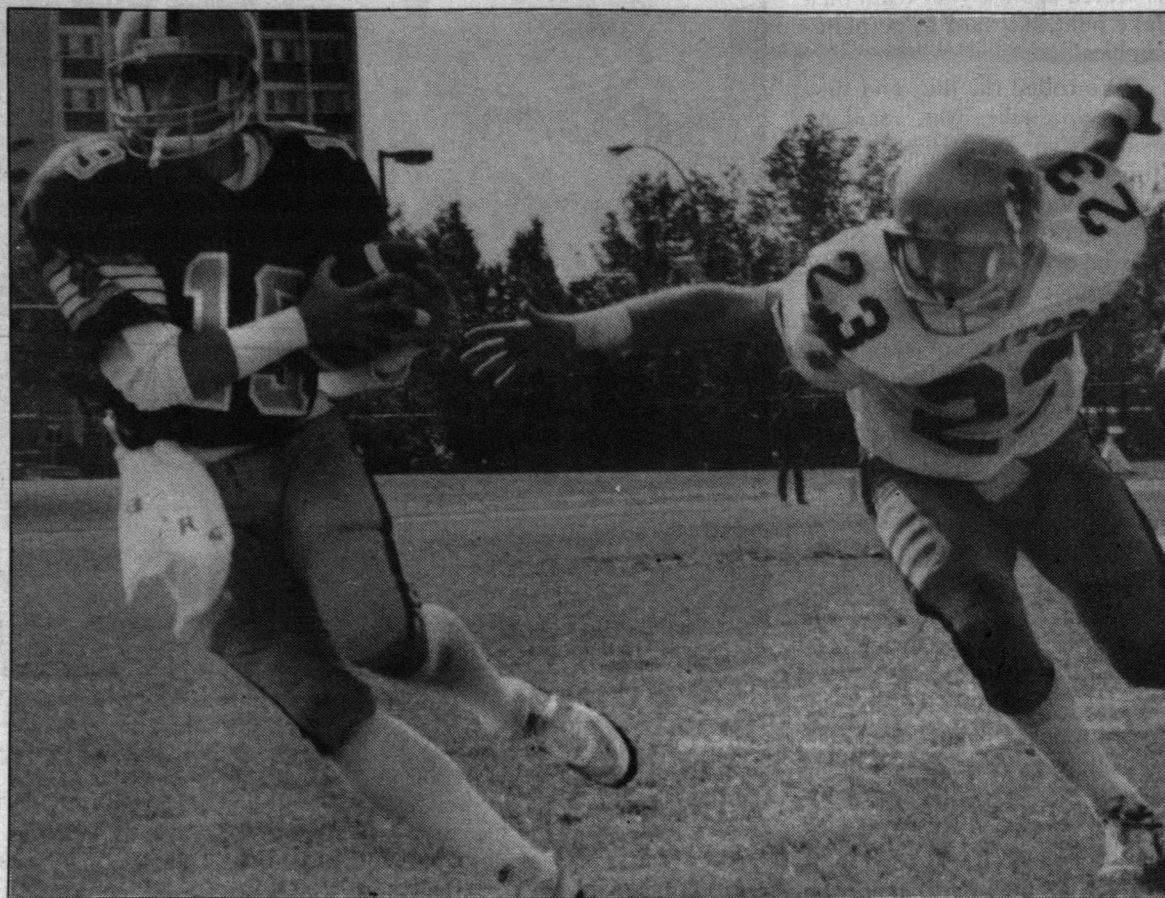
The view from the sidelines

A series of gridiron vignettes

by Randal Smathers

The score is seven-one for the visitors, and the Golden Bear offence is a quiet bunch on the sidelines after having failed to move the ball twice in succession. Suddenly, on the field, linebacker Spencer Sekyer gets an open route to the Manitoba quarterback, Chad McKay, who is rolling away from Sekyer. It is a classic opportunity for a blind-side shot, an injury-maker. The Bears on the bench see this, and the air is filled with hoarse shouts, like the baying of hounds, urging Sekyer on before his prey can unload the football and gain protection from contact under the rules.

On this occasion, McKay throws the ball just before Sekyer arrived, sensing the defender's rush and hurrying his throw in order to curl up on contact to save himself. There is an air of disappointment on the Bear bench; it was a good hit, but it fell short of being a vicious, damaging assault. Football is blood sport, and the pack had the scent, but missed the kill.



Bison Kevin McNutt (23) couldn't block this pass caught by Bear Todd Oczkowski (19).

the next play, the Bears try the same pass, which is picked off by the defence. Bourque gets up from the pile and walks off, holding his facemask with both hands.

Quarterback Mark Denesiuk says that the offence feels like they have let the defence down. "They've seen too much playing time, because we're just going one-two-punt, and the guys are trying hard, maybe trying too hard, to make something happen."

Brian Forrest looks a little bit like Charles Manson with his game face on.

Defensive halfback Neil Ferguson is the picture of discretion after the game: "When the defence is playing so good, it takes a little bit of the wind out of your sails. It's a team effort. When things aren't going good, we try and pick it up a little more and give the offence another opportunity."

Nose tackle Rick Medcke watched the last two plays of the game beside me, telling me over and over how fast defensive back Trent Brown was, as if sheer speed was going to let Brown make a hail mary catch and win the game for the Bears.

After the game, I asked him if he was frustrated with the offence. "We realize they're young," he said, "and we try and help them out as much as we can... I don't know, maybe a few guys are a little frustrated, but I think it's more a frustration within ourselves, and we're taking it out on (the offence)."

"He's getting burned... We're not getting burned. You don't see us getting burned" — Matheson

Defensive coordinator Dan Syrotuik and head coach Jim Donlevy are a study in contrasts on the bench. Donlevy is a small man, given to small explosions followed by a walk down the sidelines, away from his players, before returning to call the next offensive play.

Syrotuik, a big man, stands with his feet planted three feet apart, and substitutes vocalizing for Donlevy's hikes. Anyone within 20 feet can tell exactly how the coach feels about virtually every play. It must be hell sitting on the other end of this headset when he forgets to move the mouthpiece before he yells at someone.

There is more than blind anger to Syrotuik, however. Mike Buhler, a second-year player, is caught for an illegal block on a kick return. He comes off apologizing, and Syrotuik merely calms him down, trying to get him to think ahead instead of dwelling on his mistake. When veteran Jim Clelland does the same thing, the coach greets him with a flurry of verbal abuse while Clelland is still fifteen yards out on the field; veterans should know better.

Steve Kasowski, Alberta's kicker, had not connected on a field goal in the first two games of the year. He is lining up for his second attempt of the game; the first failed. As he starts forward into the ball, a voice comes from

the Alberta bench in tones more reminiscent of prayer than cheering: "Come on Steve." The team knows that the kicker is not replaceable, and they need his contribution.

Manitoba cornerback Roy Brown gets beat deep two plays in a row by Pierre Bourque, and his Alberta counterparts Trent Brown and Todd Matheson are screaming taunts at him from the sideline. The coaches let this go on for a couple minutes, then tell them to only shout "positive" things.

Brown says that he tried to get opponents thinking about "things besides the game." Matheson, on the sidelines with a sore hamstring, is less kind: "He's getting burned, that's why we're yelling at him. We're not getting burned. You don't see us getting burned."

Football is a blood sport, and the pack had the scent, but missed the kill.

Brian Forrest looks a little bit like Charles Manson with his game face on. He has a fu manchu moustache and goatee, but has shaved his head, and he has those great psycho eyes that you like to see when they're on your side of the ball.

He comes raging off the field after having been knocked out of bounds short of a first down, yelling at himself, then he throws half a bottle of water on his face helmet still on — then he yells at himself some more, then throws the rest of the water in his face, then he storms back to the sideline to encourage the defence to try

harder. What you might call a role model.

After the game, Forrest is much more approachable than one would expect from Charles Manson. "I just try to stay pumped up," he said, discussing how he tries to keep his younger teammates in the game. "We've got to get it up before the game and take that intensity on the field."

The defence on this team is about to explode from frustration. Linebacker Jim Toomey, sitting on the bench and taking a breather in the fourth quarter was happy

and relaxed about the way the game was going, as the offence was moving the ball. I ask him if it's easier playing defence with the offence putting points on the board. "It makes a big difference. The hard work goes for nothing (otherwise). We're all getting it together." Linebacker Brent Korte laughs "in the second half."

Ten minutes later, wideout Pierre Bourque fails to dive for a pass a few feet in front of him, and directly in front of the players on the sidelines watching. Toomey literally jumps up and down, screaming, "This is a game Pierre, get in the goddamn game." On

Join us for the Classic Adventure...

THIS WEEKEND



HIGH CLASS BRASS

"Pure Dynamite." - Sacramento Union

SEPTEMBER 16 & 17
8 P.M. - Jubilee Auditorium

This dynamic pop/jazz trumpet duo will perform works by DUKE ELLINGTON, DOC SEVERINSEN, BACH, GERSHWIN and more!

NEXT WEEKEND



BELLA DAVIDOVICH,
Piano

URI MAYER,
Conductor

"An artist of immense power..." - New York Post

FRI & SAT SEPTEMBER 23 & 24
8 P.M. - Jubilee Auditorium

PROGRAMME:
BRAHMS - Piano Concerto No. 1
HANDEL - Royal Fireworks Music
SCHUBERT - Symphony No. 8 in B minor ("Unfinished")
RIDOUT - Fall Fair

TICKETS

at all BASS OUTLETS, the ESO Box Office, 428-1414
or AT THE DOOR. Rush Seating: \$5

STUDENTS CAN SAVE UP TO 55%

Edmonton
Symphony
Orchestra

with the Student Sampler Pass. On sale until Friday at the ESO display in HUB Mall or at the ESO (10010 - 109 Street, 428-1414)

Uri Mayer, Music Director

