

DEFENCE TOUGH AS...

Bears buffalo Bisons

by Cam Cole

Bad is bad is bad is Manitoba. Manitoba's coach admits it. The Bisons themselves know it. Fans throughout the league heartily agree. And now the Golden Bears know it.

The Bears didn't beat them as badly as they are used to being beaten, but it was close.

The Bisons, who had averaged 12 points per game compared to 38 against so far this season, improved their lot, dropping Saturday afternoon's classic by a mere 35-12 before a sparse crowd at Varsity's Tedium, er ... Varsity Stadium.

The score, however, is deceptive. Jim Donlevy's crew needed two touchdowns by the

defence to make the score lopsided, pulling away only at the end.

As late as 12:08 of the second quarter, Manitoba led 3-1. Bears' single was on a 25-yard missed field goal by Joe Poplawski, while place kicker Dave Pearson had the hat trick for the Bisons. Yes, it was like a hockey score.

Then Dalton Smarsh who, along with Brian Fryer, didn't play in the first quarter, scored on a 6-yard dash, giving Bears a 7-3 lead. A two-point conversion failed, and the two teams, puttering aimlessly about the field until the halftime gun.

At least a few of the players seemed to get a bit more serious about the whole affair in the second half. (Witness Manitoba's two dramatic singles on shanked field-goal tries, coming within minutes of each other.)

With six seconds left in the third quarter, Smarsh passed the 100-yard mark on an eight-yard run for Bears' second touchdown. He had been in the game less than two quarters. Poplawski converted and Alberta led 14-5.

In the fourth period, starting quarterback Brian Larsen finally had Bears' offence in gear, and hit Poplawski with a touchdown pass from 8 yards out.

On the next set of plays, Bears middle lineacker Dennis Blond intercepted a pass from Bill Petrie, who replaced starter Rick Koswin, and scampered 75 yards for another Alberta major score.

Poplawski converted both, and Bears had a 28-5 lead.

Bisons quickly neutralized that touchdown with one of their own, a 15-yard pass from Petrie to Wayne Ledyard and converted by Pearson, making it



Photo by Bob Austin

Gary Widynowski (22) will return this Bison fumble recovery 105 yards for a touchdown.

28-12, and actually had something resembling a threat going a few plays later, with the ball at the Alberta 4 yard line.

A fumbled handoff, however, was picked up by Bears' safety Gary Widynowski, and run back 105 yards for another touchdown with 51 seconds left in the game. Poplawski's convert was the last point scored.

Larsen enjoyed his best performance of the season. He completed 12 of 17 passes for 164 yards, but more than that, he was poised and accurate, especially in the second half when Bears were stretching their lead.

As usual, Fryer represented most of Alberta's passing yardage, grabbing 6 passes for 131 yards.

On the ground, Smarsh carried the ball 18 times for 121 yards, while Pat Barry rushed for 72 yards on 6 carries.

Fred Andrich (4/77) and Ledyard (4/62) led Manitoba receivers, while Barry Safiniuk (6 carries /38 yards) and Gordon Bone (12/42) were Bisons' top rushers.

Bison coach Gary Naylor was neither pleased nor particularly displeased at the loss. He is getting lots of practise at taking setbacks philosophically this season.

While a bit surprised at his team's rather drastic plunge from prominence in the WIFL,

Naylor said, "I think it's a reflection on the lack of minor football in general in Manitoba."

He says the junior program in the province is at a low ebb, and that there are only nine high school teams from which to garner players.

While most WIFL teams carry at least a 40-man roster, 28 of which they can take on the road, the Bisons have only 30 bodies at their disposal. Likewise, they had only 54 players at their training camp, compared to 75 or more at other Western Universities.

As a consequence, Manitoba has six fresh-from-high-school players in their starting lineup. The only one is Bears' squad is Poplawski.

Adding to their woes are injuries to outstanding linebacker Brent Schwartz, all-star tight end Mike Kashty, and no less than six linemen.

While Bisons slipped to 0-6, Bears' win evens their record at 3-3, tying them with UBC, who at 3-2, have a game in hand.

Calgary Dinosaurs moved into first place Friday night, defeating Saskatchewan Huskies 37-20 in Calgary. Fullback Dan Diduck ran wild in that contest, scoring five (5) touchdowns and 63 total yards.

Dinosaurs, who are here against the Bears next Saturday, now hold a 4-1 record. Huskies are 4-2.



Pat Barry (11), rushing for some of his 72 yards, offers a convenient handhold for Manitoba tackler.

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