

Bear Scott McIntyre (34) goes for a rebound. The Bears were swept by UBC this weekend.

Close losses frustrate Bears

by Alan Small

The two losses the Golden Bear basketball team incurred this weekend against the UBC T-Birds would have been great for the Bears if they were early in the year in a tournament. When their conference games that need to be won to stay in the playoffs however, all they do is increase the frustration level of the coaching staff.

"The two games sum up our whole season," Bear head coach Don Horwood said, "they were close but no cigar."

"(Assistant coach) Mark Dobko said to me that maybe this is the kind of character builder a young team like us has to go through."

The Bears aren't getting blown out of many games this year. They have however lost more than their share of close ball games. The pair they lost this weekend were no

different as the Bears lost 91-82 and 84-80.

"I'm getting frustrated losing these close ball games," Horwood said.

In the first game, the Bears were keeping up with UBC, but they gave up fourteen straight points early in the second half.

"We hit a bit of a dry spot," Horwood said, "I don't know what it was."

Foul trouble, especially on the inside men were the reason the Bears ended up on the short end of the stick.

"Foul trouble has been a problem all year long," Horwood said, who also said that all three big men, Mark Baker, Scott McIntyre, and Rick Stanley had four fouls late in the second half. The foul trouble also allowed the T-Birds to get a big lead, most of the points coming

from the foul line. They outscored the Bears by 11 points from the penalty stripe.

Chris Toutant led the Bears with 21 points the first night.

The Bears luck the second night wasn't much better, especially with 14 minutes to go in the game, when the Bears were behind by 21 points.

"We were flat, we couldn't get anything going," said Horwood, who debated with himself whether to give up the game and give some playing time to his rookies. Some great defence and quick run made Horwood cancel the decision, as the Bears made a barn burner out of the game when it ended.

With the score 82-80 and seven seconds left, Toutant, who scored 27 points to lead the Bears in the second game, "rimmed out a jumper which the T-Birds J.D. Jackson came up with. He was immediately fouled by the Bears to stop the clock. He sunk both free throws to end the game 84-80.

The T-Bird sweep makes the Bear objective plain and simple this weekend against the Calgary Dinosaurs. The Bears need a sweep of the Dinos, who they are fighting for the final playoff berth. Calgary has the same number of wins as the Bears but have two games in hand.

"Calgary lost by 37 and 26 this weekend in Saskatchewan," said a relieved Horwood, who was nearly in shock earlier in the year when the Dinos upset the much more experienced Huskies twice in one weekend.

Games go Friday night and Saturday afternoon at 8:30 and 3:30 in Varsity Gym.

Hockey's unsung heroes

by Randal Smathers

Sort through his bitching about the refereeing in Friday's game, and Calgary coach George Kingston gave a more likely reason why his team fell to the Bears — the Bears had everybody going all game, whereas not all the Dinos came to play.

The depth and desire of the Bears causes real trouble for opposing coaches. Clare Drake was able to dress four lines of forwards, and all four of them saw "about even" ice time, according to their coach, excluding special teams.

The real stars of the Bears are the guys you don't hear about. Not the Cranston brothers, Stacey Wakabayashi and Parie Profit, but Wes Craig and Todd Stokowski, the "other" players on the big lines. Guys like Dave Otto (who's taking a medical degree and playing hockey), Jeff Helland, Rob Glasgow and Curtis Brandolini. These players show up every night, work like hell, force the other team to skate hard every shift, and pot their fair share of goals.

"You've got to keep your intensity up in this league... one shift can mean the difference between winning and losing," is how forward Bret Walter describes his role on the team.

The opposition has also got to count on steady play from more

than Parie Profit on the Bears blue-line. Brent Severn is sixth in team scoring and adds size and toughness.

Less spectacular but no less valuable are Grant Couture, Darwin Bozek, Gord Thibodeau, Howie Draper and Guy Paradis. Thibodeau was third star against Calgary this weekend. Couture might have the best wheels on the blue-line, and Bozek and Paradis have filled in well when the top four defencemen need help.

Thibodeau felt his selection provided some overdue recognition, not for himself, but for the defence as a whole — it is the second-best in the league.

Thibodeau credited the forwards with coming back and helping by slowing up opposition forecheckers and allowing the defence to play transition. He also noted that the goalies allowed the defencemen to think mainly about rebounds by being dependable at making the first save.

"We've really been working at getting the forwards back and playing strong in our defensive zone," said Glasgow. "Take a little pressure off the defence."

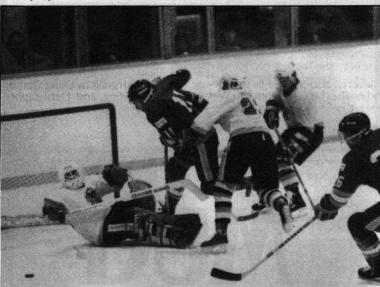
A notable addition is Jack Patrick, back after a slow start caused by injuries. "I'm a grinder-type player," he said. His persistent forechecking Friday caused some turnovers and drew at least one penalty, and was typical of the Bear forwards.

Wes Craig, who regularly skates alongside Sid Cranston, says he is happy if his linemate is scoring, because that means he has helped keep the other team off. He threw in a great pass to Cranston in the Calgary game in addition to everything else he adds to the team; frequently unnoticed by the fans.

Then of course are the guys that have the hardest job of all — sitting and watching, waiting until they get the call — players like Dan Wiebe, Ross Jeske, and Todd Gordon.

"I think I'm ready to play this year," shrugged Jeske, looking around the dressing room after the Face Off game Tuesday. "but there are so many guys on this team that can play."

"We like to think we've got pretty good depth," said Drake. "We dressed four forward lines tonight, and there were no let downs. I think all four lines skated pretty well." And you don't have to tell that to the Calgary Dinosaurs, who saw just how tough these Bears can be — all these Bears, not just five guys.



Bear goalie Darren Turner stops a Dino shot while Grant Couture clears the front of the net.

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