

Ex-Bears hit the road to the NHL

by Mark Spector

Colin Chisholm and Al Tarasuk have two things in common right now: They're both leaving the Golden Bear hockey program, probably for good; and they're both opening what, up until this point, is the biggest chapters of their hockey careers.

The two Edmonton natives were teammates on the Golden Bear team that won the national championship last year, and were together again this fall. But instead of putting on the green and gold under the watchful eye of Clare Drake in old Varsity Arena, they found themselves at the Met Centre in Minneapolis, Minnesota trying to impress the likes of North Stars head coach Lorne Henning.

Only the colours stayed the same. So how does one adjust to the switch from plying your trade along with a bunch of college buddies, to suiting up alongside the likes of Kent Nilsson and Willie Plett.

"It doesn't last. You can't let it," says Tarasuk of the initial awe that a rookie feels. "You have to have confidence in your own ability. I didn't feel out of place at all." Tarasuk's first NHL experience

Golden Bears a shot.

"My first camp (in Buffalo) I was in a state of shock," admits the quiet giant, defenseman Colin Chisholm, 23. "I had just come out of Midgets a year before and the whole thing was a blur." Chisholm would attend



two more Buffalo Sabre camps, sandwiched in and around two years with the Calgary Wranglers of the Western Hockey League and four years in the U of A program.

When the smoke cleared for these two hopefuls down in the Twin Cities, Chisholm was assigned to Springfield of the American League, while Tarasuk, 22, was sent to Indianapolis of the International league. And having seen a few kids head towards the bright lights with stars in their eyes, it's safe to say that these two gentlemen are well-prepared for what they're getting into.

"I have a good idea of what lies ahead," says Chisholm. "I'm 23 and it's time to get going. Everybody has goals and, obviously, my goal is to play in the NHL."

"I know that I'm not going right to Minnesota. It would be great to start at the top but you know that you have to pay your dues."

"I might not get this opportunity again."

"Obviously you have to aim to make Minnesota. You can't set your sights on the farm team," says Tarasuk. "According to them, I'm not far down on the depth chart. But I'm not going to get stuck down in the minors. I've only signed a one-year contract, so (if

nothing else) I'll make enough for three years of university."

The most important thing, according to the player, is to believe in one's own abilities. We've all heard the aging veteran, just released from his fourth team in as many months, claiming "I know that I can still play the game," even though some of hockey's most prominent talent evaluators have decided that he can't. But at this stage of the game you just have to keep on plugging, and always give it your best shot.

For the 6'3", 210 lbs. Chisholm he must play his own game: a take-the-man-first, hard hitting defensive style of hockey.

For Tarasuk it means he must put the puck in the net, but just as importantly, he better not turn the other cheek when the rough stuff starts.

Tarasuk led the Golden Bears in both penalty categories last season: 76 penalties, 193 minutes. But he also showed his ability to help his club in the scoring department. Tarasuk finished second on the Bears in goals with 34, fourth in game winners with four, and tied for the lead in hat tricks with a pair.

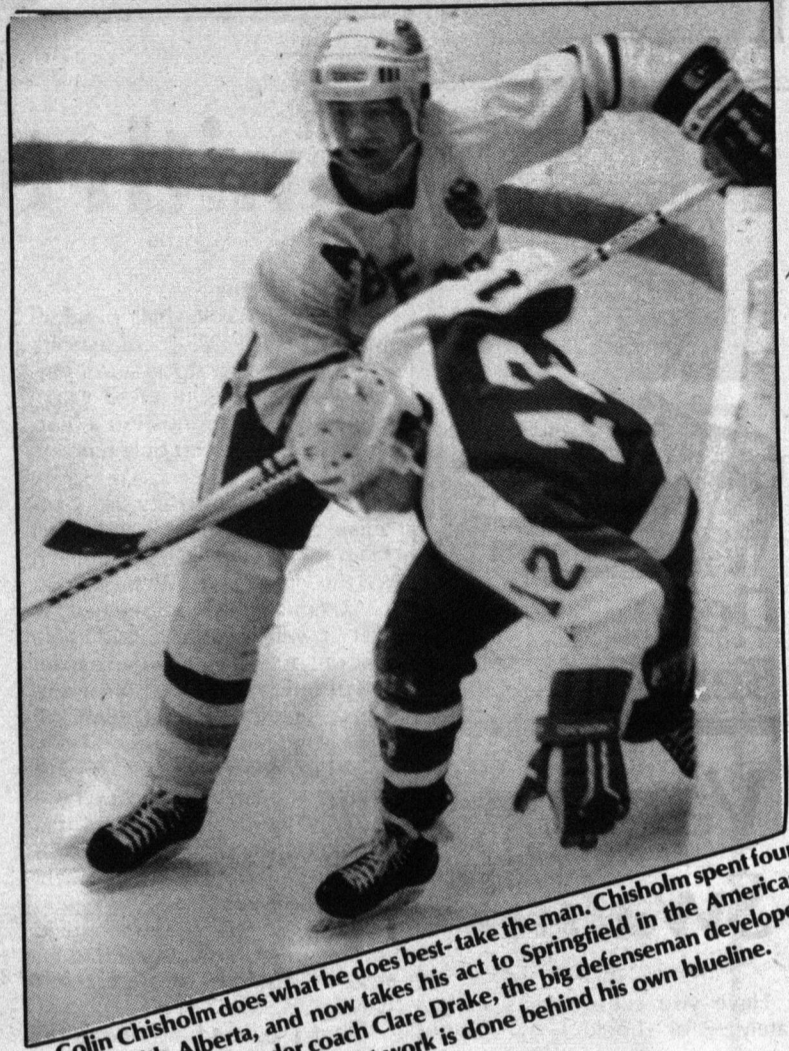
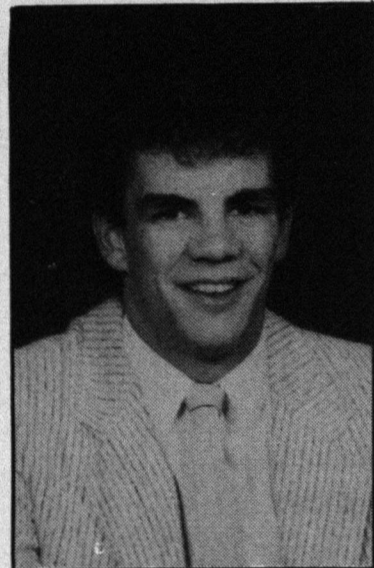


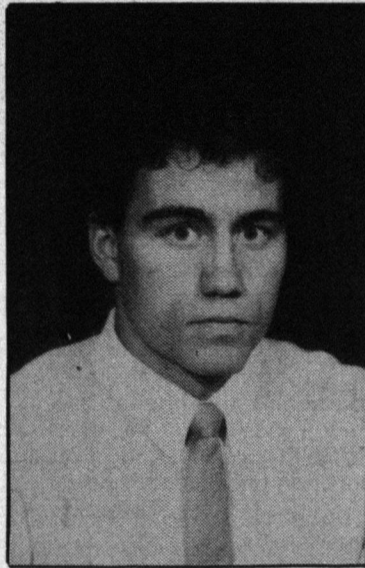
photo Bruce Gardave

Colin Chisholm does what he does best—take the man. Chisholm spent four years with Alberta, and now takes his act to Springfield in the American Hockey League. Under coach Clare Drake, the big defenseman developed into a solid player whose best work is done behind his own blueline.



Forward Al Tarasuk... off to Indianapolis

came at the 1984 training camp of the L.A. Kings, after which he turned down an invitation to their minor-league system to give the



Defenseman Colin Chisholm... assigned to Springfield

"They know that I can put the puck in the net," said the well built

(6'1", 195 lbs.) science student. "I don't think that I've ever made a team just because of my fists. Certainly not in Minnesota anyways."

"Let's just say that I knew it wouldn't hurt my chances if I went out and fought (in training camp). But the important thing that they want to see from me is just to play it tough, not necessarily to drop my gloves."

So that is the story of two home boys stepping out into the real world of professional hockey. They're not the first, and certainly not the last, but at the U of A at least, their respective careers will

be marked by many.

Just as the career of ex-Golden Bear defenseman Tim Krug commands attention, as just about ten days ago it was announced that the Vancouver Canucks had given up on him, handing Krug an outright release.

So what does that mean to these two hopefuls that leave Drake's program with the same aspirations that Krug no doubt had?

"The biggest thing that I've learned is that every situation is different," says Tarasuk.

"It's a business, now," admits Chisholm.

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