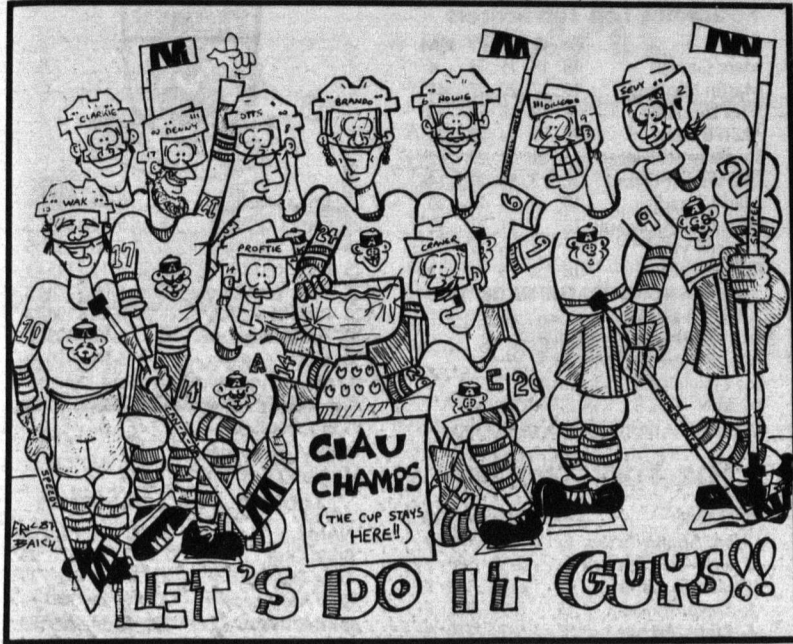


CIAU Hockey Championships



'A' Pool a pick 'em

by Alan Small

The coaches said in the pre-tournament press conference that this is probably the most evenly matched nationals in the 25 year history of the event. Taking a look at the teams in Pool A of the nationals, one can see the logic behind their statements.

The University of PEI Panthers (AUAA champions) and the University of Western Mustangs (wildcard) make their first appearance in the CIAU's, while the University of Saskatchewan Huskies make their first appearance since they won the national in 1983 when Dave King was behind the bench.

The Panthers were 20-4 in league play and are riding a four game streak. Ranked number two at the tournament, they have bounced in and out of lower five of the rankings all year.

Six-foot-three Dave Shellington led PEI in scoring with 47 points, while first-year man Craig Jenkins had 39, and was a nominee for CIAU rookie of the year. Rob Brown logged the majority of the time between the pipes for the Panthers and has a 3.90 goals against average.

"We've got a lot of heart, a lot of hard work," said a loose Vince Mulligan, coach of the Panthers. "We'll grind 'er."

Western Ontario, fifth ranked, drew the most controversial pass to the nationals. After losing a 2-1 overtime heartbreaker to York University in the OUAA final, the Mustangs snagged the lone wildcard berth for the nationals, under extreme protest by the University of Calgary.

"We earned our way here," insists Mustangs' coach Barry Martinelli, CIAU Coach of the Year this season. "It's only unfortunate that we didn't win the OUAA."

"The controversy shouldn't exist. We won three straight and went to number two, while Calgary lost two to Alberta and stayed at number one," Martinelli added.

Western plays a disciplined style

and like UQTR and York are a very good skating club. They don't play it wide open though, as only one player is in the CIAU top 20 scoring. Mike Tomlak, a 6'3" sophomore, led the Mustangs with 47 points on the season. Tim McCullough and Chris Jackson have shared the goaltending chores this season, with McCullough coming out on top with a shining 1.73 goals against average in conference play this year.

The last team in Pool A is quite familiar to fans in this part of the country, as Saskatchewan and Alberta have one of the best rivalries in university sport.

The Huskies went through two tough three-game series with the University of Manitoba and the University of Calgary, bouncing back from a 1-0 deficit to upset the reigning Canada West champions from Cowtown.

The Huskies are a big, physical squad that is littered with six foot third year players. Rookie Ken Morrison leads the well-balanced Huskie attack with 51 points, and although their attack is anchored by freshmen, the Huskies also rely on a big, experienced defence and hot goaltending. Ross McKay and Greg Holtby led Canada West goaltenders in least goals allowed during the season, and McKay was named Canada West Player of the Week both weeks during the conference playoffs.

Dan Leier, a feisty center, will be back with the Huskies after tearing up his knee in mid-season. The Huskies missed his leadership and scoring punch throughout the second half. His play was well noticed when he did play though, as he was named as a second team Canada West All-Star.

With three of the most evenly matched, yet totally different, squads in Pool A, it will be a long trek for the team that does succeed in reaching the final.

Vince Mulligan says it best: "I wish the other teams as much luck as we're going to have."

Sid's happy to get involved

by Mark Spector

Sid Cranston watched last year as brother Dennis skated away with the CIAU Hockey Championships Most Valuable Player award. Although ecstatic that his team had won the University Cup, it was hard to really feel like he had contributed.

He took only eight shifts in two Bear games in the tournament, due to a severe knee injury which had sidelined him since November 1985.

When all was said and done though, Cranston had found himself a new — and hopefully temporary — role on the Golden Bears: Sid Cranston the scoring leader had become Sid Cranston the motivational wizard.

"His personality is a real spark-plug," then assistant coach Jack Cummings would say. "At times this year we needed that guy who pats everyone on the back and gets people going. Sid took that role."

That was last year. And even though the '86-'87 campaign has been injury-filled, Cranston is ready and raring to go come Thursday night vs. Trois Rivières.

"Last year was tough because I knew that I couldn't play up to my capabilities," said Cranston, 24, as he strapped on the brace he now wears on his right knee. Tuesday's practice was different than most with the nationals only two days away. But one aspect remained the same: these days, before the 5-11, 173 lb. center plays any kind of hockey he goes through a taping and buckling process akin to the refurbishing of the old Arts building.

Our interview moves into the trainers room. "Have you taken a regular shift for three consecutive games this season?" the reporter asks. A couple of people laugh. Cranston only smiles.

"I think so," he says. Then, thinking, he qualifies that. "I played in the first four games of the season, and I think maybe four after Christmas too. I guess that's my

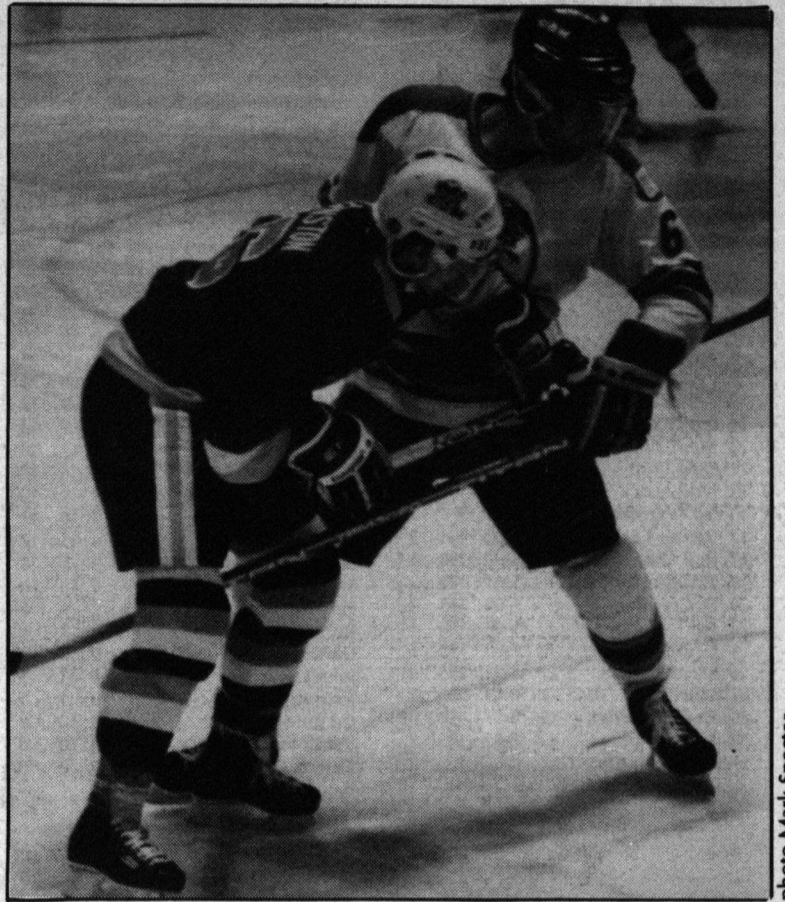


photo Mark Spector

Sid Cranston is ready to contribute on the scoresheet this year.

longest streak, meaning that I get hurt in the fourth game."

He gives some advice to trainer Ron Melusa as his left ankle is becoming well wrapped. "Well, I've got six charts in the therapy clinic," he reveals almost proudly. "That's kind of my second home these days."

"This layoff has been great for me," he says of the almost three weeks off after the World University Games in Czechoslovakia. "My therapy has been coming along really well."

After playing in only 19 of 56 Bears' games last year and tallying 33 points (18 goals), the Phys. Ed. student managed to injure his good knee and both ankles this year. His

stats for the Canada West season were typical though, as Cranston averaged a point a game with eight goals and nine assists in 17 games. Many of those points came at crucial times, and not included in that total is a two goal, two assist, MVP performance in Face Off '87 versus NAIT.

He lives with his brother, who is younger by a year, in an apartment belonging to ex-Alberta forward Perry Zapernick's parents. "I guess there's a little bit of Golden Bear wherever you go, eh?"

Bears fans hope that there's a Sid Cranston wherever their team goes for the next two years until his eligibility runs out.

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