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Sports

Drake rebuilds for Bisons

Vertz and Lamb back to face 8-1-1 Manitoba



Mark Spector

Nothing wrong with the CFL

As the "Big Game" between the Edmonton Eskimos and the defending Grey Cup champion British Columbia Lions grows nearer, everyone who has one has been stating their opinion of the CFL.

I'd like to have my say too. I like the CFL. If you grew up in this city chances are that you spent a couple of unruly evenings fighting for Dave Cutler converts in the rickety old endzone seats at old Clarke Stadium. I spent many.

But loyalties be damned. I'm sick of hearing these self-proclaimed sports experts (who believe that it's stylish never to be satisfied) downgrade a game that provides as much excitement as the Canadian Football League does.

The athletes in the National Football League are bigger and stronger and faster than their CFL counterparts. Granted.

The playbooks are far more sophisticated, the cheerleaders more interesting to the Nth degree.

But by far the most opinion swaying aspect is the fact that comparing American television coverage to CBC's or CTV's is akin to choosing between Dom Perignon and ripple.

And that, my friends, is why the CFL does not play on Sunday mornings or Monday nights.

Who would you choose? Don Whitman or Keith Jackson? Pat Marsden or Pat Summerall?

Chuck Ealey or John Madden? It is to laugh.

But when I look down on to the field from my seat on the 25-yard line, 35 rows up, I see quarterbacks that can't afford to waste a down by scampering out of bounds. I see wide receivers that, on first down, still must get open because the ball will be in the air.

I see only 20 seconds on the time clock between plays. Not 30.

I see running backs that know that each play represents one of only two opportunities to get close to a first down or it's back to the sidelines.

And don't forget that for every Montreal Alouettes there are the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and New Orleans Saints. For each Saskatchewan club there's Buffalo, Houston, Indianapolis, and St. Louis.

Yes, there's a lot of things you don't see — like Lawrence Taylors, Eric Dickersons, and Dan Marinos. But this weekend you'll see two teams that are freezing their butts off trying to earn a spot in the Grey Cup game next week.

You'll see as much or more effort on the frozen Commonwealth Stadium turf as in the NFL.

At -15 C, you'll see one helluva a lot of "jam."

But these guys aren't making \$200,000 a year to do it.

by Mark Spector

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it is broke, get out the hammer and nails.

Clare Drake put on his carpenter's belt this week in an attempt to refinish his Bears hockey team that has lost four straight and fallen to fifth in Canada West with a 5-5 record.

And not a moment too soon, as the first place Manitoba Bisons rumble into town for a pair of games.

The Golden Bears have gone from being a Paladium Ballroom last March to somewhat of a (w)rec(k) room this season. So Drake has done what seems like the obvious — try to recapture a little of last year's magic by doing what worked for you back then.

And playing who played for you back then: namely ex-Team Captain and sturdy defenseman Ron Vertz, and bruising winger John Lamb.

Those two have been joined by newcomers Derek Peterson and Bud Langstrom in the Bears' camp this week, as Drake tries to shore up a defense that has fallen prey to injury, and inexperience, during the first half of this season.

Peterson may be gone by today, however.

Last Saturday dressed only four defensemen (Bozek, Draper, Proft, and Cousins) as rookie Brent Sevryn was suspended and Dean Clark sat out his second straight game with a knee injury and a bad ankle.

Only Vertz and Lamb will be eligible to play this weekend against the Bisons (8-1-1), but both Sevryn and Clark will be back on the blueline.

"I think that the coach was worried about having the same situation as last year," said 6'3", 212 lbs Lamb of the glut of injuries that took Alberta by surprise late last year. "This year he wants to be on the safe side."

Lamb would be happy to see the Golden Bears win a few with him in the lineup, as he's just coming off his best year to date with the Bears football team, and is no doubt hungry for some success. He was a two-sport man last year as well, joining the hockey Bears in the second half of the season and earning a championship ring.

"It affects my school a little bit," he admits, "but I caught up in all of my courses since the season ended (Nov. 1). But the worst thing is that you come back (to hockey) and you look around and you realize how far behind everybody else you are."

Lamb has skated only once since the Golden Bears CIAU final win on March 23rd. Vertz is another story, though. "I don't know if he's going to stay around," says Drake of his dependable 6'0", 165 lbs pointman.

Vertz is in his graduating year in Civil Engineering and his wife is expecting their first child in February. The Glenboro, Manitoba native missed the finals last year with a separated shoulder incurred in the semi's, and with the Bears in the CIAU's as hosts again this year he may just want a piece of the action. Either way, his presence will not only stabilize a young Alberta defense, but cause a few guys to look over their shoulders and pick up their intensity level. He looks



Two Manitoba defenders show why the Bisons have earned their reputation as a tough squad.

ready to play right now, however.

"We have to be stronger in our own end," Drake declared. "We were losing a few too many one-on-one situations in our own zone. We've got to get tougher."

But the worst area that Alberta was losing one-on-one at was goalie versus shooter — Krill lost that battle two of five times in the all-important overtime period on Saturday.

"I'm going to have to make the big save when the score is tied in the third," said Krill as he reflected on a tough start to the season after the 9-6 OT loss to Calgary. "I have to be the commander out there; I

have to quarterback the team.

"The goalie is a big part of moving the puck out of your own zone. Right now the confidence is there sometimes, not all the time."

The other major move that Drake has made prior to this, Alberta's most important series to date, is the reunion of what was the Golden Bears' most productive unit of last season.

Drake has restored Curtis Brandolini back on leftwing with center Dennis Cranston and rightwinger Stacey Wakabayashi. The trio accounted for 21 percent of the team's scoring output last year. Todd Stokowski had replaced

Brandolini on the left side since training camp. "We've got to shift things up a little bit," admits Cranston. "We were having a little trouble around the net for the last couple of games."

The line had been together for two years before the shift.

Bear Facts — Finally, the Golden Bears' championship banners have arrived: all 34 conference and 7 CIAU's of them. The conference ones will hang along the side walls while the nationals are double-sided and should hang over the ice surface... both games will be broadcast live on CJSR-FM, 88.5, pre-game at 7:15.

Western and UBC square off

by Philip Preville

Fullback Blake Marshall rushed for 193 yards and a touchdown on 24 carries to lead the number 2 ranked Western Mustangs to a hefty 29-22 victory over the Acadia Axemen in last Saturday's Atlantic Bowl in Halifax. The victory gives Western their second consecutive Vanier Cup berth.

The Mustangs ran over, around and through Acadia's defense, compiling over 270 yards rushing for the game. Halfback Bob Stewart also played a prominent role in this assault with a 68-yard touchdown run in the first quarter. Western's defensive backfield also had a big



game, stopping a relentless pass attack from the Acadia offense.

Cornerback Marius Locke (who is just 5'7", 180 lbs.) picked off three passes for the Mustangs. Western will play against the UBC

Thunderbirds for the Vanier Cup on Saturday. The number 1 ranked T-Birds squeaked by the Bishop's Gaeters 32-30 last Saturday in the Central Bowl at Lennoxville, Quebec. The win was not secure until Bishops — led by the CIAU's leading passer this year, Tony Harris — failed on a two point conversion attempt in the dying seconds of the game.

UBC, with a strong defense led by All-Canadian cornerback Mark Norman, will be making their first College Bowl appearance since 1982, when they defeated — who else? — the Western Mustangs, 39-14.