

No joy in Drakesville as Bears lose two

by Martin Coultts

A funny thing happened to the hockey Bears during their battle for first place. They forgot that they hadn't yet clinched a playoff spot. But the Calgary Dinosaurs hadn't forgotten, so they took it upon themselves to remind Clare Drake's toops of that fact.

And, in more ways than one, it was a very painful reminder.

The Dinos embarrassed the Bears by a 9-2 score last Friday night and followed up with a 2-1 victory on Saturday to keep their Canada West playoff chances very

much alive. With a 9 and 11 win-loss record, Calgary trails Alberta by just 4 points in the Conference standings. And the Dinosaurs could catch the Bears next weekend if they should win both games of a return engagement in the Stampede city.

Not only were the Bears humiliated in front of their own fans but, to add injury to insult, the team also lost two players with major injuries. Veteran center Breen Neeser will miss the remainder of the regular season with a separated right shoulder that was sustained in the Friday

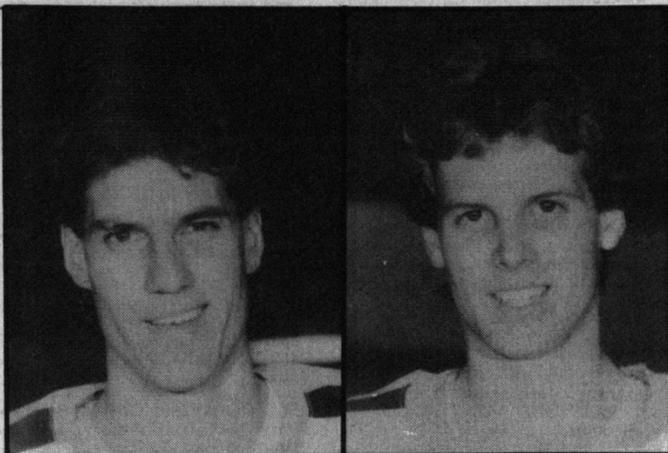
game. On Saturday afternoon an even bigger blow was suffered when rookie left winger Craig Dill suffered torn ligaments in his right knee. He underwent surgery later that evening and is out for the rest of the season. With 22 points in 20 games, Dill was the club's second leading scorer at the time of the injury. "Craig's loss will be really serious," commented Coach Drake. "He was one of our best players this season." The two players join Captain "Ace" Brimacombe on the sidelines, and leave the team with only ten healthy forwards.

To round out a thoroughly depressing weekend (from an Alberta standpoint), the Bears' Saturday loss sent the largest crowd of the season (735) away without a free spaghetti dinner. The Old Spaghetti Factory's Free Meal Deal was in effect but the hockey team, like its basketball counterpart, couldn't come up with the big win.

What's more, they nearly failed to come up with a single goal. Only Perry Zapernick's bank shot from behind the net off Calgary goalie Mike Craig's skates allowed the Bears to avoid their first home-ice shutout in nearly three years. The goal came with only 34 seconds to play in the game and spoiled Craig's bid for a shutout. He still managed to pick up first star honors, though, as he blocked 40 shots in a game in which his team was outshot 41-25.

At the other end of the rink, the Dinos had taken advantage of a Bears' miscue to open the scoring at 14:14 of the second period. Alberta had been playing very tentatively to that point with no one wanting to make the kind of mistake that had hurt the team the previous night.

So what happened? Defenceman Tim Krug lost the puck in his own end while the Bears were enjoying the man



Brimacombe (left) is out for the season. Dill (right) suffered torn ligaments and is also out for the year.

advantage and Garry Slezak converted the giveaway into the go ahead goal. Rick Laycock added what proved to be the game winner at 9:45 of the final period and Craig shut the door the rest of the way save for Zapernick's last gasp effort.

As for Friday night's game the less said about it the better. As Clare Drake understated after the final buzzer had sounded, it was "pretty hard to believe." Calgary chased Ken Hodge, the Bears' starting goalie, from between the pipes with four goals in the opening period. Terry Clark replaced Hodge and promptly let in four goals in the middle period. It was 8-0 for the Dinos before the Bears even hit the scoresheet. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. And Craig made the game appear much more one-sided than it really was with a 38 save performance (the Bears actually outshot Calgary 40-30).

For the record, Slezak, Laycock, and Ron Pierce each had a pair for the winners with singles

going to Frant Fagerheim, Doug Hendricks, and Damian Steiert. Ron Parent, with his 17th (and last) of the season, and Dill, with his 7th (and last) of the season, were the Alberta goalgetters.

In the final analysis, the Bears were a bit unlucky to lose both games. As Drake put it, "We tried hard and it was not from a lack of effort that we lost." But they ran into a hot goalie, and suffered breakdowns in their defensive zone play, on the powerplay (1 for 13, on the weekend) and with their shooting accuracy.

"We'll just have to regroup and talk about things we're not doing well, and try to remedy the situation," analyzed Drake. "It's going to be a battle—we don't have a playoff spot now."

BEAR NOTES: Saskatchewan and UBC split, leaving the Huskies at 13 and 7 while the T-Birds are now 7 and 13. Saskatchewan won 6-2 on Friday night but UBC rebounded for a 3-2 victory on Saturday.

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