

Hot Herd to rumble with Alberta

Alan Small



by Alan Small

When the Manitoba Bisons hockey club, a perennial playoff team in the Canada West conference, got off to a slow start, many teams in the west breathed a sigh of relief.

Last weekend however, the Calgary Dinosaurs, the number one team in the conference had their breath taken away in Winnipeg as the Herd rolled over the Dinos, who had only lost one Canada West game all season.

"We're finally getting there," said Bison head coach Wayne Fleming. "We got to prepare for two weeks for that series against Calgary."

Fleming returns behind the Bison bench where he made his home for seven years before last year. Barry Trotz took the Bisons to a 14-14 fourth place mark last year while Fleming was on leave. In his seven and a half years at Manitoba, Fleming has amassed a 110-55-11 coaching record.

The Bisons are the hot team right now: After getting off to a 2-2 mark (including a loss to the hapless Lethbridge Pronghorns) the Bisons have gone undefeated in seven games, including their sweep of the Dinos. The undefeated streak has put the Bisons in the middle of a tight Canada West race, one that has five teams within four points of each other. Right now, the Bisons are tied with the Golden Bears for second spot, with 16 points each. Fleming believes however, that his team won't be able to keep up the momentum they have had the last couple of weeks.

"I don't think we're that good," Fleming said, "we don't have the firepower or the experience to keep up with teams like Calgary and Alberta."

The Bisons were able to more than keep up with the Dinos last weekend.

"We played with a lot of discipline and we had good goaltend-



Defenceman Grant Couture (R) and the rest of the Bears host the Manitoba Bisons this weekend.

ing," Fleming stated. "We had a strong team effort. We won't beat teams like Calgary and Alberta unless all 19 guys pull their weight. We'll need that effort again this weekend."

The Bisons' goalies have been a strong point all season long. Nick Sereggela and Richard King, the Bison netminders, have led the Bison defence to the top rung on the conference ladder. They have given up only 36 goals in 12 games in a conference where goalies are known more for being shellshocked by pucks. Sereggela leads the conference with a 2.20 goals-against-average.

The U of A has rescheduled

this series to this weekend from its original spot just after the Christmas break. Since Fleming compares the Bears and Calgary as being equally powerful hockey clubs, is he sad to see his team get one week less to prepare for Alberta than Calgary? The Bisons would have the whole Christmas holidays to think about the Bears. Fleming, however, doubts how much his team could improve in the areas it has to over the Yuletide break.

"It doesn't really matter," Fleming said, "whenever the Bisons and the Bears meet, we really come up with some good games."

Some of the bright spots for the Bisons this year would be Pat Scott, who was named the west's player of the week two weeks ago. So far, Scott is seventh in the conference in scoring 27 points in 12 games.

GOAL POSTS: The U of A will officially present the keys to the '89 Chrysler Daytona to **Mark Birkland** from the southside. His shot in the last Bear home game was shot from the opposing blue-line and barely went through the hole that was just bigger than the diameter of the puck... FM 88 CJSR will broadcast Saturday night's game, with the pre-game show starting at 6:45.

Bears host v-ball tourney

by Alan Small

The young Golden Bear volleyball team hosts the annual North-Am volleyball tournament this weekend.

Learning the university game hasn't been much fun for the Bears so far this season. They ran into the number one volleyball team in North America, the Cal-

gary Dinosaurs, in their opener and got beaten badly. Things didn't get much better the next weekend, as they faced the number three team in Canada, the UBC Thunderbirds, and again did not come out with a victory.

"They haven't lost to anybody," Bear head coach Pierre Baudin said of the Dinos, who have even beaten the top teams from Califor-

nia so far. "We need to play more good teams," Baudin said, "we've just got to play a lot more volleyball. The Bears are young. They only sport one player (Darcy Dueck) with more than two years eligibility. They are definitely looking to the future."

"We're right on schedule," Baudin said, "we'd probably lose to those teams now even if we were much stronger." The Bears will start their 1989 schedule off against the Dinos again, and it probably won't look any better. Baudin is already looking to their team being 0-6, when they face the last batch of the schedule, which will be much easier.

The Bears will have more than their hands full this weekend, when they host some of Alberta's top club and collegiate teams. All of these club teams have the wily veterans on their side, who know all the tricks in the book.

Of those teams, Fosters, from Calgary, will probably pose the biggest problem. Along with the Calgary Volleyball Club, they dominate the Calgary super leagues. Both have plenty of national team experience and talent on

their side.

For Edmonton teams to watch for besides the Bears, will be Edmonton TVA and Fog, both of which are supplemented by Golden Bear alumni. Last year's Bear setter Troy Lorenson has joined the TVA and so far have been undefeated in the Edmonton super leagues. Also in the tournament will be Red Deer College, perennially one of the top college teams in Canada, and Keyano College from Fort McMurray.

"It's the strongest Nor-Am field since I've been here," Baudin said, "we hope to be in one of the medal games, but it's always difficult to predict one of these tournaments."

On the women's side of the tournament, the Pandas have decided to stay away from the court and keep their minds on the term papers and final exams.

"We'll be spending the rest of our time entirely on school," Panda coach Suzi Smith said, "For a lot of our younger players it is better that they are prepared for their exams. Many of them haven't even seen a university final yet."



For the rest of the picture, go to the North-Am tourney this weekend.

It's winter meetings time, folks, and it is rumor heaven.

Whether it is some free agent signing or possibly signing with a new club, or a hot trade between George Steinbrenner and Charles Bronfman.

Andres Galarraga and Dennis Martinez for Don Mattingly.

Wait. Stop the Presses! Here's another eight inch rumor story we can stuff on page three of the sports section. Someone signed Scott Fletcher! Front page!

What usually come out of the winter meetings is what happens at most conventions. Some small things happen, some minor rule changes. But unlike most conventions, when the gossip starts a flyin' and the rumor mill starts a grindin' you don't hear the news being talked about in the bedrooms, it is read on the sports pages.

Steinbrenner said what? Billy Martin beat someone up again? Wait. Stop the presses!

Of course, besides the rumors, trades occur. They actually have more trades in the winter meetings than they do just before the trade deadline. Why not? 26 out of 26 general managers don't go to some hotel to be named later just to drink and be merry.

Rumors make the winter meetings gather sports writers quicker than horses to water. The hot rumor sets on the front page. More baseball stories are on sports pages in North America during the off-season than any other sport in existence.

When football shuts down for the winter and spring, you don't hear all that much about it, unless someone else ends up going to a drug rehabilitation centre. You don't hear that much about hockey, but then again, the NHL off-season is about as long as a NBC sitcom.

The winter meetings occur halfway between the end of the season and the beginning of spring training. Talking about spring training, Fernando Valenzuela is looking for a new contract and will hold out from spring training until he gets one.

Wait. Stop the presses!

Finally, the only other happening at winter meetings is that teams finalize their coaching staffs. Will Billy Martin manage the Yankees again? Talk to him. Talk to Herr Steinbrenner. Talk to Dave Winfield, the real manager of the Yankees. Instant 15 inch story.

Wait. Stop the presses!

Let 'em roll. He's been hired so many times that it isn't news.

When the winter meetings are over, the baseball writer can slow down until the next big happening before spring training. Arbitration hearings.

In about a month.

Rob Galbraith