

Bears concerned over Bisons

by Ajay Bhardwaj and Alan Small

Sure the Bears finished in first place in Canada West, but the Manitoba Bisons have them sweating, or at least concerned.

Last weekend, the Bears met the rumbling horde and nearly got their heads smashed in, for the Bisons took one of two in a series the Bears were expected to sweep.

"We have to initiate the play—don't let them take it to us," said Bear assistant captain Stacey Wakabayashi, who led the conference in scoring this year with 79 points. "We have to do all the things which got us into first place."

The Bears are concerned about the Bisons defence—the best in the west.

It was a defence that often baffled them, especially in the first game of last weekend's series,

"If we score in the first ten minutes, the series will follow." — McCarthy

a 4-2 Bison victory.

"We have to score early," said forward Doug McCarthy, "because once they stop us they get confidence. If we score in the first ten minutes, the series will follow."

The Bears are expecting Manitoba to check their centers closely, so that means the scoring antics of Sid Cranston and Adam Morris-

son will be closely scrutinized by the brown and gold.

"As the center goes, so go the winger," said McCarthy. "They'll focus on Sid. If we screen for him we'll be all right."

According to McCarthy, it isn't easy to cover wingers like Wakabayashi or himself.

"It's tough to shadow a winger because our wingers are up on their defence a lot," said McCarthy.

The Bears also believe that they won't be able to carry the puck into the offensive zone like they can against many teams due to Manitoba's strong blueliners.

"We have to dump the puck in," said defenceman Howie Draper, "their defencemen and wingers like to stay high on us."

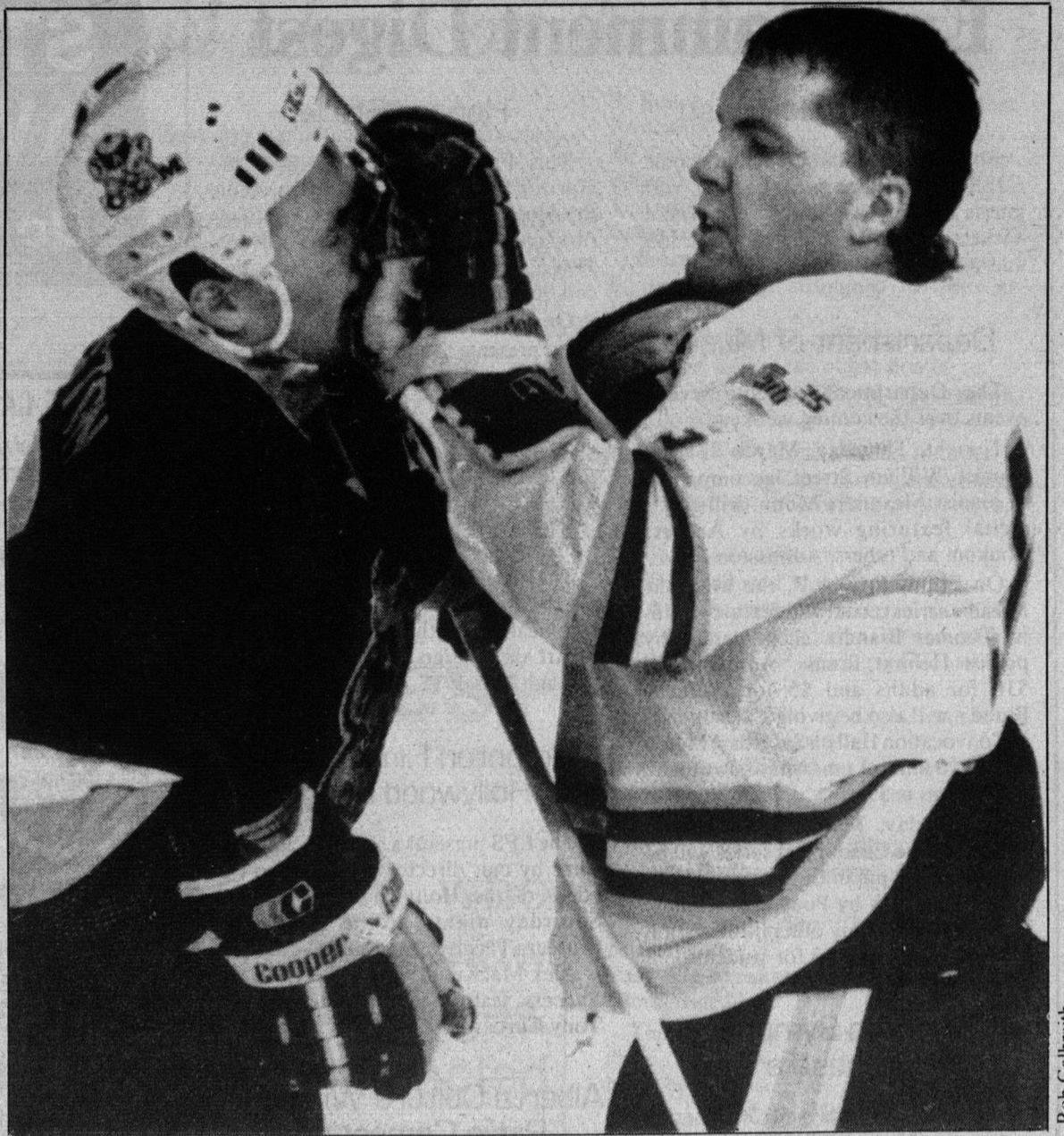
Bear head coach Clare Drake is looking for the conference's best power play to get going once more. They were silent all weekend in Winnipeg.

"It was a special teams battle and they won," said Drake of last week's action. "On Saturday, we played stronger in our own end."

The Bear defence is wracked by injuries right now. Gord Thibodeau will visit a specialist for his chronic stomach muscle problems and is questionable for this weekend. Add Guy Paradis' charleyhorse problem, a suspension to Ian Herbers for a fight in Saturday night's matchup, and Grant Couture with the flu, and you have a decimated back line.

Clare Drake understated the situation in Wednesday's practice, "We're really hurting on defence."

Games start at 7 pm on Friday and Saturday nights in Varsity Arena, and if a third game is necessary it will be played at 2 pm Sunday afternoon.



The Bears hope they don't get it in their face like Sid Cranston did against NAIT.



vs.



**Game 1 Fri. 7 pm
Game 2 Sat. 7 pm
Game 3 Sun. 2 pm
(if necessary)**

Bear guard makes all-star club

by Alan Small

Guard Sean Chursinoff was the lone Golden Bear basketball player to make the Canada West all-star teams.

Chursinoff joined UBC forward Al Lalonde, Saskatchewan forward Sheldon Ryma, Victoria center Spencer McKay, and Calgary guard John Vigna on the first all-star team.

Ryma, the league's leading scorer this year, and Vigna, a constant threat from the three point line tied for the first in the voting.

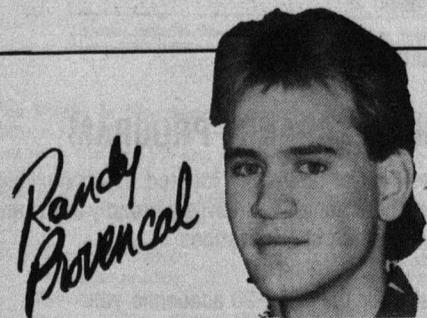
Victoria placed three more players on the second team.

Forwards Dale Olson and Gerry Divoky along with guard Geoff McKay were picked. They joined Lethbridge guard/forward Ryan Heggie and Calgary post Brian Masikewich.

Chursinoff lead the Bears in scoring with a 17.7 points per game average, and in free throws attempted and made.

Chursinoff's 174 free throw attempts (of which he made 154 of them) is nearly twice as many as anybody else had in the country this season.

UBC and Victoria will battle for the Canada West title and the spot in the nationals this weekend.



While western premiers are fighting for a Triple E Senate, this weekend's CWUAA playoff series between the Alberta Golden Bears and Manitoba Bisons will feature a triple E all of its own.

Energy, equality, experience.

And those three e's should add up for an interesting playoff.

Energy: just which of these two teams worked harder over the last two weekends?

Surely the Bears, beaten only five times prior to reading week, must have had

playoffs on their minds as they split with both the Regina Cougars and the Bisons. As a couple of Bears said a few weeks back, they wanted to make sure they were nice and rested for the playoffs.

That meant possible lax play against Regina and Manitoba. Now the playoffs are here... are the Bears prepared to pick up where they left off three weeks ago.

You can't split in the playoffs.

On the other hand, Manitoba was in a dogfight with UBC for the final playoff spot and had to exert themselves to achieve that goal. During that time, they swept Calgary and split with the Bears.

Yes, the Bisons played giant killers; they know they can do it and are on a high because of that. The momentum they're carrying into the semis could be enough to snuff out the Bears. But the Bisons could run out of gas if the series goes the full

three games.

The Bears are better rested, so advantage Alberta.

Equality: the only way this matchup would be more even is if it were between Alberta and Calgary — and that's because of the rivalry. Top offence versus top defence.

As already stated, the Bisons win big games against the top teams. But in Varsity Arena, the Bisons are zero for two. Overall against the Bisons the Bears are three for four, outscoring them 19-9.

Putting the puck in the net has been the monkey on the Bisons' backs all season, as they ranked only fifth in the CWUAA. The Bears haven't had that problem and should have little problem finding the mesh.

The Bears have too many loaded guns to handle; slight advantage Bears.

Experience: this could be the determining factor in deciding who goes to the finals. Bear coach Clare Drake and a handful of the team leaders have tasted the success a CWUAA championship gives. They know what it's like, the younger players have heard and want to sip on some bubbly too.

But the same could be said for the Bisons. Although they haven't found playoff success like Alberta, they've been contenders and want more. They must figure it's gotta happen sooner or later — for Manitoba, better sooner.

Still, experience is greater in the Bears camp and they must be given a big advantage.

And while I'm picking Alberta in two games, the Bears should not yet look past this series to a possible revenge match with the Dinos.