

Panda Gymnasts claim second straight Canada West crown — p. 17

Sports

Al Small spends a night at the Fab Forum — p. 18



Tim Enger

Victoria's dynasty thrives on playoff pressure

The monster lives.

Although the **Victoria Vikings** victory over the Bears in **Canada West basketball semi-finals** over the weekend has to be considered an upset, it really shouldn't be that much of a surprise if you look at the history.

For the last couple of years coach **Ken Shields'** Beast has shown such an inability to be killed off in the end that it would make a great 'B' movie.

They are reminiscent of the **New York Islanders** in the waning years of their hockey dynasty, never bothering to finish on top of their division, let alone the league, but always showing up for the playoffs and walking off with the **Stanley Cup**.

In 1985 UVic was surprised by the



Bears and lost in the Canada West semis. But that didn't matter because they were the hosts of the **Western Regional**. Assured a spot in that tourney, they went on to win, then take the nationals.

In 1986 they lost to **Lethbridge** in the Canada West Championship game, but were invited to the nationals as a wildcard, and, you guessed it, wound up winning the silverware.

This year they really looked down and out, finishing fourth in league play with a paltry 5-5 record. But as soon as playoff time rolled around the Monster woke up and . . . well you know what happened on Sunday.

The worst part of it is that this was the year to beat them. This was supposed to be a rebuilding year for them. But now with the Bears out of the way I wouldn't bet against them winning their eighth straight national crown.

And it's not over yet.

The Canada West is going to have to put up with the likes of 6'8" **Jerry Divoky** and 6'6" **Wade Loukes** for two more years, 6'8" **Brian Kruger** and 6'4" **Geoff McKay** for three more years, and worst of all, 6'9" **Spencer McKay** doing his **Sasquatch** impressions for four more long years.

Note the height of these guys, the only player of any note the Bears can counter with next year is 6'7" **Scott McIntyre**, after him it's Munchkinland.

This means that the Vikes, depending on what they do this year, have the potential to win every national title in this decade!

As Victoria's media guides states on the cover — "The Legend Plays On" . . . and on, and on . . .

HEARTBREAKER

Overtime loss spells end to Bears most promising season

by Phillip Preville
Victoria 87 Bears 82
Bears 68 Victoria 55
Victoria 81 Bears 79

They say that in a sudden death playoff series the underdog has the advantage, presumably because they have nothing to lose.

Going into last weekend's Canada West semifinal, the Bears stood to lose their best shot at a national title ever, and the respect of all those that ranked them as the best in the country for most of the year. For fifth-year men Mike Suderman, Mike Kornak, and Dean Peters, it was their last and only chance. They had the opportunity to make it happen.

This year's Victoria Vikings squad, on the other hand, stood to become the first UVic team of the 80's not to win the national championship. Their seven consecutive CIAU titles ranks among the greatest dynasties of any sport. It is a winning tradition that brings top players to that school year after year.

"We don't talk about it at all," said Viking coach Ken Shields, "but it's there. They are expected to do well."

"The history is there in that you never want to be the team that breaks the streak," said Vic guard Vito Pasquale.

If nothing else will motivate them, that will. The Victoria hoop team has an aura about them that stuns you. Even if you've beaten them previously, as the Bears had done twice this year, you still have to face them in the playoffs. And playing UVic in the playoffs is a monumental task. The whole country is at war with the Victoria Vikings — knocking them out of the playoffs is like putting an end to the Nazi regime.

"I don't think that the (Bears) players care about history," said U of A coach Don Horwood after game two. "They just want to win two games, for themselves."

Maybe this history nonsense only matters to reporter types who are looking for a unifying theme for their story. Any other excuse for winning or losing is probably just as plausible.

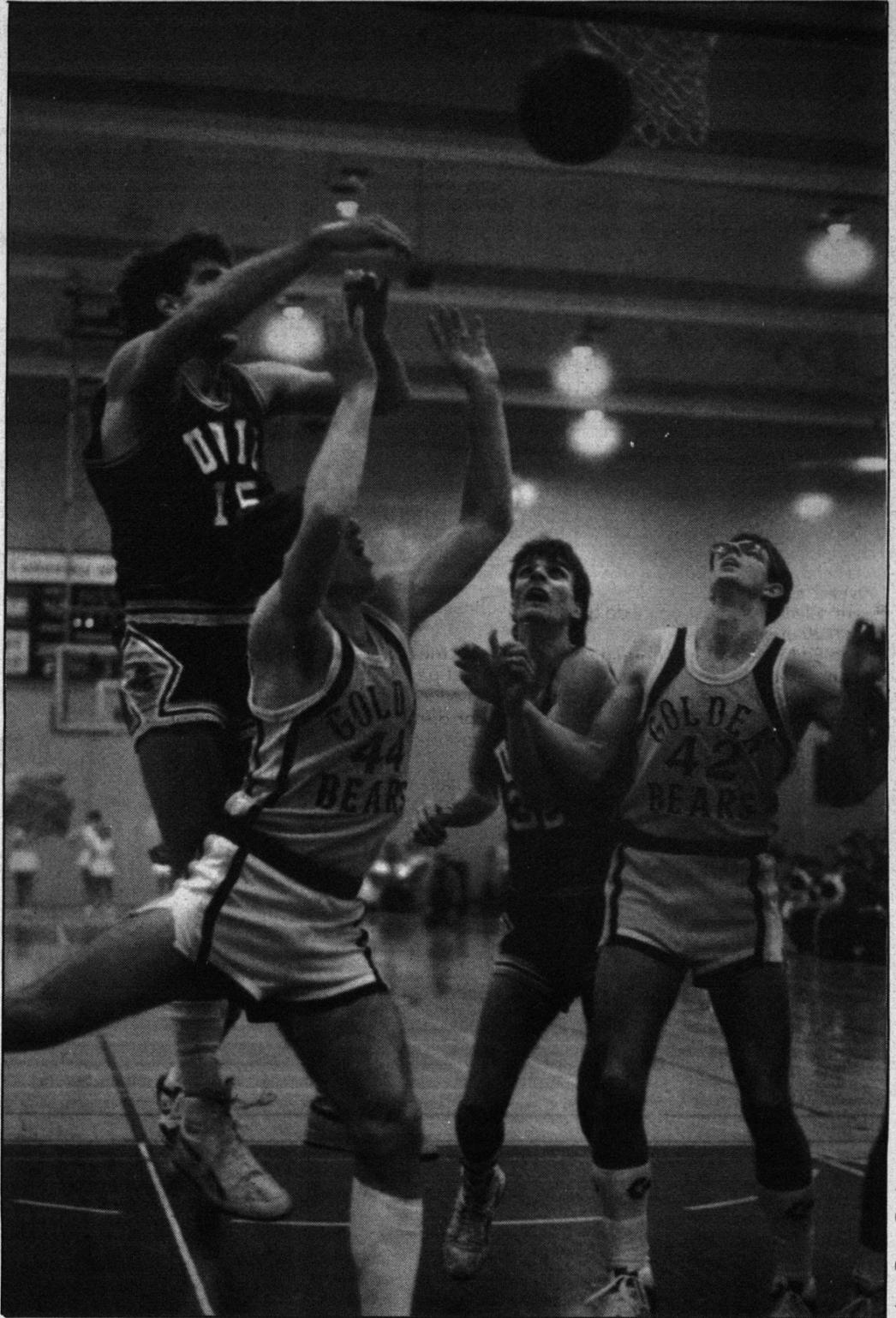
The U of A basketball team's tremendous season came to an end last Sunday. Viking post Spencer McKay tallied his 18th and 19th points of the afternoon on two clutch freethrows with 0:38 remaining in overtime, giving the Vikings an 81-77 lead in a game that would end 81-79.

"We refused to crumble," said Victoria guard Lloyd Scrubb, who, like Pasquale, is a fifth year player. "They kept coming at us, but we always came right back and took it to them."

The Bears locker room was silent afterwards, many players were in tears, others angry, others lost or beside themselves.

Dean Peters bravely volunteered to break the silence for the press, but there wasn't much that he or anyone else could say. "The game was back and forth almost all the way through, and we had our chances, but we couldn't finish them off."

Throughout the year, all the U of A players felt that they had been through it all, that no new situation could arise that they couldn't handle. They were correct; the pres-



Victoria's height advantage was the story, as a smaller Golden Bears team was eventually worn down. Here Spencer McKay (15) deflects Mike Suderman's shot.

sure wasn't new, nor was the opposing team. They did prove themselves equal to the task in Saturday's 68-55 victory. Game two's early minutes featured inspired play and tough defense that dictated the game's tempo. Soon, without much coaxing, the Vikings were throwing passes into the stands. Their heads were spinning. It was vintage Bears basketball, and there was no doubt that they would go on to win the game.

However, the Vikings had nerves of steel on Sunday afternoon. Even the amazing comeback that brought the Bears from a 16-2 deficit at 13:09 of the first half to a 54-52 lead at 10:25 of the second half didn't phase them horribly. The Vikes were always able to score a momentum-breaking basket that would calm the whole gymnasium. The Viking's height then took

over. A 6'4" Suderman or 6'5" Peters can be only so effective against a 6'8" McKay or 6'9" Jerry Divoky. These two inevitably encountered foul trouble, and midway through overtime they were history.

"It's hard to believe that five years work came down to this," said Suderman, whose hand was so steady and cool, it had to be admired. "But the program has come a long way. Don Horwood and Steve Roth have worked very hard and deserve lots of credit."

Horwood was equally full of praise. In addition to the leadership of the three graduating seniors, Horwood praised guard Sean Chursinoff's play in the series and the whole team's determination and work ethic throughout the year. "These guys put basketball back on the map in Edmonton," he said. "I'm very proud of them."

As for the game's outcome, Horwood was obviously disappointed. "I'll be up all night second-guessing, but for now I suppose it's fate."

Final Forum — Don Horwood has been named **Coach of the Year in Canada West** for this season . . .

Mike Kornak is a first team all star while **Mike Suderman** was named to the second team . . . the rest of the first team was comprised of guards **Lloyd Scrubb** (UVic) and **Paul Johansson** (UBC), and post **Byron Tokarchuk** (Sask.), all unanimous selections. **Ryan Hegge** (Leth.) was the other forward . . .

the second team was post **Spencer McKay** (UVic), forwards **Aaron Point** (UBC), and **Suderman**, and guards **John Vigna** (Cal), and **David Karwacki** (Sask.).

photo Bruce Gardave