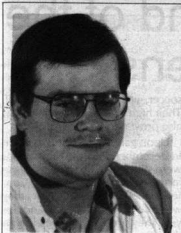


## Toutant finale part of playoff preview



Alan Small

### Olympic sweat is worth it

Last Saturday, Susan Natrass, the Director of Interuniversity Sports for the Department of Athletics, was staring intently at the television screen set up at Varsity Gym.

As part of the "Olympic Sports Weekend", televisions were set up in the venerable gymnasium to get the people who were watching the basketball games that afternoon into the Olympic spirit.

Susan Natrass didn't need any help to get into the Olympic spirit. She, like the rest of us watching the glamorous Opening Ceremonies from Calgary, could get in the spirit, whether or not they were singing "Four Strong Winds", or doing the two-step, or lighting the cauldron to mark the end of the journey of the Olympic torch.

Many of us have fantasized being in the Olympics. Whether we've been running the mile, playing the Soviets in hockey, or jumping off the 90 metre tower in Calgary, many of us armchair athletes (or even many athletes themselves) have been participating in the Olympics in mind, and spirit, if not in body.

That is why I am so envious of Olympic athletes, like Susan Natrass. She's represented our country at the '76 Olympics in Montreal. She is going to Seoul later this year to compete in the '88 Olympics.

Three more U of A grads, Liz Czenczek, Deb Covey, and Shona Schleppe are also going to the Seoul Olympics. Although they are all field hockey players while Natrass is a trap shooter, it doesn't matter what sports they participate in. Getting to the Olympics is probably half the fun. And probably all the work.

When U of A volleyball coach, and former Olympian, Suzi Smith ran the torch across the BC-Alberta border, she said that meeting different athletes at the Olympics was just as fun as the actual competition.

The reason why Opening Ceremonies give people the Olympic spirit is that they bring all the athletes together. They dress them all up in the same get-up to get that team spirit of the team: the country. When you see the team walking into the stadium on television, one athlete will look exactly the same as the next, whether they are Ben Johnson, Victor Davis, or Liz Czenczek. Every athlete made it to the Olympics, so they don't demean any of their efforts by having all of the noticeable athletes walk first, followed by all the rest. That is wrong.

It takes a hell of a lot of toil, and sweat to make the Olympics. It's all worth it.

by Alan Small

Five years ago, it wasn't fashionable to be a Golden Bear basketball player. They weren't respected on campus (they had no fans) and they were laughed at off campus (they weren't very good).

Five years later, Golden Bear basketball tickets are some of the hottest buys in town. The team has also improved from these years in the past. Although, they're not as good as last year, Bear coach Don Horwood, who started five years ago, takes his Bears against the gigantic Victoria Vikings this weekend and still thinks the Bears have a chance for a split. Five years ago, no one would give the Bears a chance when Victoria came to town.

"We were a joke," Bear Chris Toutant recalled. "Teams expected us to lose and we obliged." Toutant was a walk-on to that first Bear camp under Horwood.

"I couldn't shoot worth a damn," Toutant said of his first year with the Bears. Five years later, it is the

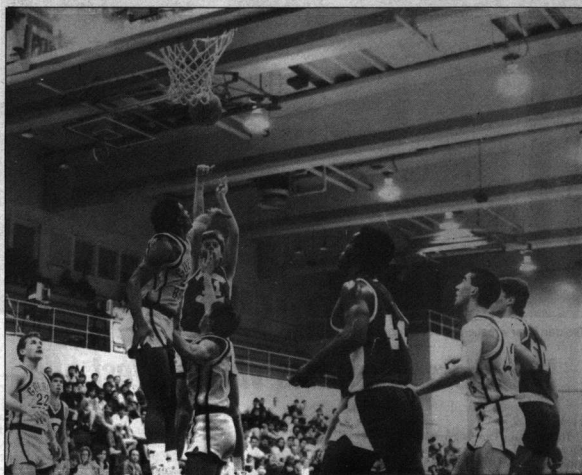
**"We were a joke. Teams expected us to lose and we obliged." — Toutant**

opposing guards who say damn after he cans three pointers.

Toutant, fellow guard Cliff Rowein, and post Mark Baker will all be playing in their final home stands this weekend, when the Bears host the Victoria Vikings in what is likely a preview of the first round of the Canada West playoffs.

Horwood was able to see both Baker and Toutant from their first games as Golden Bears when they were bench sitters until now, when the both of them are leaders on the rookies-laden squad.

"Mark Baker hung in there the last two years, when things were



The Bears are hoping to block a few Viking shots Friday and Saturday.

Photo Paul Menzies

rough," Horwood said. "He didn't give up. He shows the work ethic of the Golden Bear. Every single practice he gives everything he has."

The way Toutant showed up to the Bear training camp is one of the strangest sequences of events.

"I was coaching the BC junior team and (Vic coach) Ken Shields told me that I should invite this Chris Toutant kid from Campbell River. I sent him an invite, but he didn't show. Ken said he had unbelievable potential. Then I come here for Bear training camp then walking in is this kid Chris Toutant. I think he signed up for social reasons rather than the basketball program."

"I came out here to go to school," said Toutant. "I didn't really have a good career in high school."

"He was extremely weak funda-

mentally," Horwood said of Toutant as a rookie. "He'd get himself into messy situations when he would be out of control. He didn't have good court sense."

Toutant certainly has that now, as he was the Canada West basketball player of the week, after a 41 point performance against the University of Calgary last weekend.

Although Toutant is having a fine year in his last season as a Golden Bear, he still considers last year as one of his best years personally.

"When Dave Youngs and I made it to the all-star team at the Golden Bear Invitational last year. That was great," Toutant said, "even playing with the great players like 'Nak' (Mike Kornak) and Suds' (Mike Suderman) that have been here over the years."

In the five years Toutant has

been here, he has seen the basketball program develop into one of the nation's best.

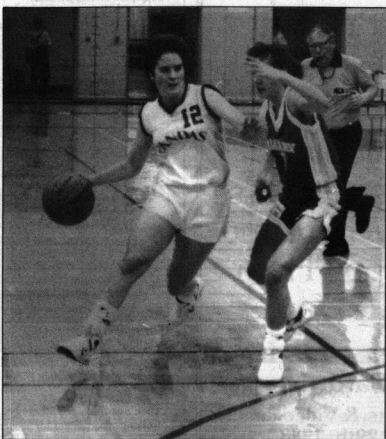
"The guys we get out of high school now are better than I was when I was out of high school," Toutant said.

The five years playing basketball for the Bears has been a lot of toil for Toutant, who has been nagged with little injuries throughout the year.

"Physically, I couldn't play another year," said the 24 year old, "but this is fun. You can't consider this work can you?"

**POST UPS:** The Bear games this weekend resort to their normal Friday and Saturday times: 8:30 both nights... Victoria comes into town the second ranked team in the nation, with a 16-2 Canada West record. Alberta is at 7-11.

## Pandas playoff hopes look bleak



Panda Michelle Durand (12) dribbles past a Dinosaur.

Photo Paul Menzies

by Alan Small

The task is at hand for the U of A Pandas basketball team this weekend.

They have to win one of the two games this weekend against the Victoria Vikettes this weekend to make the playoffs.

Right now, the Pandas are tied with the UBC T-Birds and are one game ahead of the Saskatchewan Huskiettes in the Canada West conference standings. The unfortunate event for the Pandas is that the T-Birds and the Huskiettes face each other in their last games of the season. The two teams must split their games or Saskatchewan must sweep for Alberta to have a chance.

The Pandas also have to win one of their games against the Vikettes as well.

The Pandas record in conference play is 4-14. The Vikettes record is 16-2. That doesn't bode well.

Not only that, but the Vikettes are also fighting for first place in the conference with the Calgary Dinosaurs. Both teams are 16-2 but Victoria holds the edge. A loss at this point of the season would most certainly put them in second spot. They would then lose the chance

to hold all the playoff games in their own gym.

The Pandas will have to have a perfect game to beat the Vikettes who boast two national team members in their back court. Karla March and Sandy Espeseth are those players, and the Pandas are going to have to keep them from sinking three pointers all game.

"It's all mental lapses," Panda coach Diane Hilko said, "if they give up two or three pointers, they don't realize that if they give up a few, they don't make the adjustments without me calling a time out or yelling from the bench."

Mental lapses have been a problem all year for the young Pandas, who have frustrated Hilko time after time in the big games, like two weeks ago against UBC, when a win would have given them a better shot at the playoffs.

The games start at 6:30 Friday and Saturday in Varsity Gym. The Pandas will also be honoring Linda Mrkonjic, who will be playing her final games in a Panda uniform this weekend. She'll still be going to university though, as she's completing her medical degree.