Golden Bears look to regain form in crucial homestand

by Philip Preville

The Golden Bears' basketball team is being given an immediate opportunity at redemption this weekend. After one short week in the coveted top spot, the now third ranked Bears will meet the UBC T-Birds on Friday and the now topranked University of Victoria Vikings on Saturday.

Ousting the country's Top Guns would almost certainly put the Bears back on top of the country, but to do so, coach Don Horwood will have to get his team flying higher than Tom Cruise offens-

The team's field goal percentage has been below 40 per cent for the past three games, which include victories over UVic (then number one), and Western Ontario (then number two).

"Our defense kept us in those games when we were having trouble scoring," said Horwood. He does not feel, however, that his team has performed up to its potential at all this season. Disappointingly, the solid defensive play only came and went in last Saturday's loss to the Saskatchewan Huskies.

These will be the second and third games for the Bears in their ten game conference schedule. The short schedule makes games against tough competition like UBC and UVic must-wins, no matter how early in the schedule they come. "They're musts if we want a shot at first or second in the division," says Horwood, "which means homecourt in the playoffs.

"We definitely can't lose both. That would put us in a mad scramble for a playoff berth."

Horwood has been mixing up his troops somewhat. Second year player David Youngs' outstanding play in the Golden Bear Invitational has earned him a starting spot at off-guard. To make room for him, 6'3" Mike Kormak moves to the small forward position, 6'7" Scotty McIntyre moves to the bench.

This has been the most recent trend, but it is not written in stone by any means. "The difference between our starters and our bench is minimal," says the talkative coach. "Cliff Rowein was our best player in Saskatchewan and has been playing very well throughout January." Rowein is still above 60 per cent from three-point range (inciden-



Don Horwood — "(These games) are musts if we want a shot at first or second in the division."

photo by Mark Spector

tally, 60 per cent from anywhere on the court is exceptional).

The Bears have their hands full on Friday against UBC, a young team that is a big surprise, and definitely for real. They defeated the fifth-ranked University of Calgary last weekend, holding them to a diminitive 49 points.

On Saturday, Victoria coach Ken Shields brings his modern Canadian sports legend to town. UVic have won the CIAU championship for the past seven years in a row. Although it is generally agreed that British Columbia has a better basketball talent pool than anywhere else (Bears Suderman, Dean Peters, and Kevin Ottewell are B.C. natives), the string of championships is still an amazing feat. The rate of player turnover some years can be very high at some schools but it is somehow never debilitating at

Horwood indicates that a large part of Victoria's winning formula has been a dominating post player. Seven footers Gerald Kazanowski, Greg Wiltjer and Cord Clemens have graduated from the program.

Perhaps UVic's top gun this year is 6'9" freshman Spencer McKay, who played with the Canadian Junior team last summer. "He's a very mature player for a freshman," says

Horwood, "but he's a long way from being the intimidator that Vic's other big men were."

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