



SPORTS



Hardluck Bears fall short

by Andrew Watts

In many instances the game of hockey can be played tough and hard but in the end it boils down to a game of inches and ifs. Such was the case in Montreal last week for the U of A Golden Bears hockey team. They were taking part in the first annual International University Cup and finished out of the money tying one game 3-3 and losing another 5-3. But appearances can be deceiving and the scores contradict their play.

The tournament was the first of its kind in North America and organizers promise the tourney will continue.

"This is only number one of many more to come," said Claude Mouton the honorary president of the tournament.

The tournament was conceived to give the players some exposure to NHL scouts but more importantly, to promote university hockey and to show people (especially in the Montreal area) just how high a calibre university hockey is.

Sponsored by Molsons, the Montreal Canadiens and a host of others it like any endeavor undertaken for the first time had its kinks and drawbacks. One of the main differences to regular university hockey was the fact that the game was divided into three 15 minute stopped time periods. This was not a problem as much as it was an adjustment for the players. The real problem for the Bears was the fact that the ice was not flooded between every period. Thus alot of snow built up on the ice and this slowed, considerably, the game style of moving the puck fast up ice of our Bears.

Played in the Colisee Jean Beliveau in Longueuil, a small suburb of Montreal, the tourney consisted of eight Canadian teams and four from the United States. The teams were separated into four divisions of three teams each. They played two games against the other teams in their division and the four winners took part in a semi-final to determine two finalists.

Alberta was placed in 'C' division with two American teams. One from Clarkson college in Potsdam, New York and the other from the University of New Hampshire. New Hampshire won the division with victories over Clarkson and our Bears and played the Moncton Blue Eagles in the semi-finals. Moncton won that and eventually beat Dalhousie (from Nova Scotia) in the final to capture the championship.

Although Alberta finished with a 0-1-1 record they could have easily won their division with just a couple of breaks. They were, in fact, the best team in their division. They were, unfortunately, the hard luck Bears in the tournament. Following is how the tournament unfolded for them.

Game One.
Wed. Nov. 4
vs. Clarkson.

This game boiled down to one of inches for the Bears, four inches to be a little more precise. With the Bears leading 3-2 with 1:46 left in the game, Clarkson's Ted Fauss scored to give the Bears a very unwanted 3-3 tie. The goal for that matter, was not one to go down in the annals of hockey history.

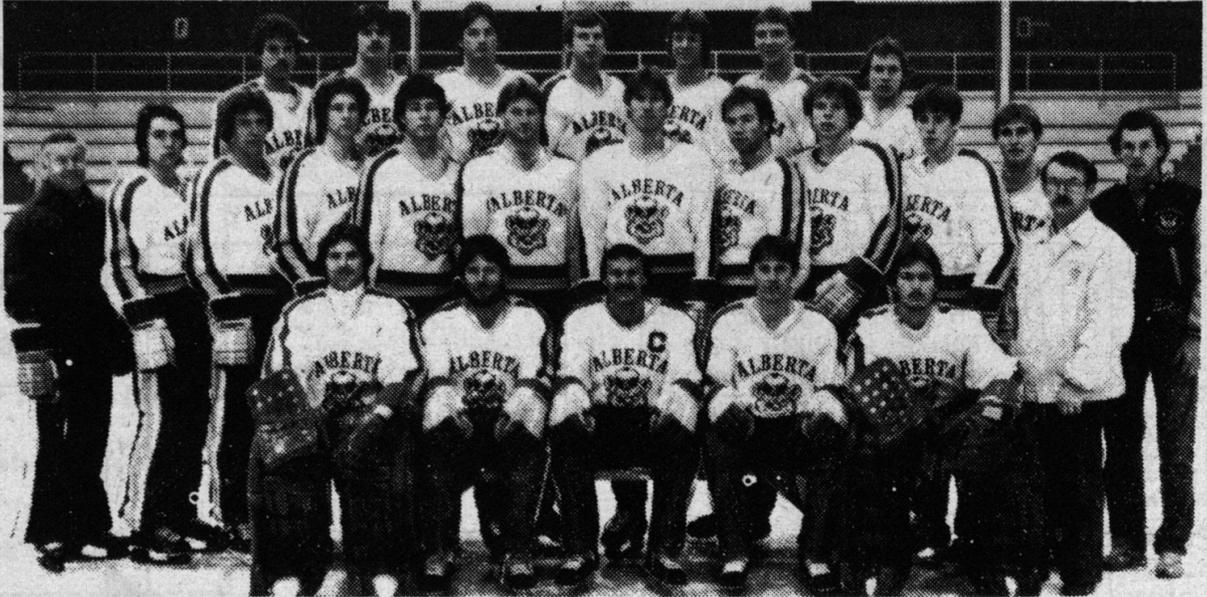
A face-off in the Bears zone was won by Clarkson and the puck went back to Ted Fauss at the point. He took a shot that was blocked but the puck bounced right back to him and he whacked a puck through a screen of players and between an approximate four inch gap between the right goalpost and the right pad of starting goalie Denis Potvin.

"The shot hit Ace (Brimacombe) in the arm and could have gone anywhere else ..." said a dejected coach Clare Drake after the game.

When the initial shot was taken Potvin only heard it and dropped down to cover the net. After he got up he heard the second shot and dropped again.

"I didn't even see it, I heard it hit the back of the net but that's it," said Potvin.

"When I hear a shot but can't see it, I drop to a semi-split position to try and cover most of the net. My right pad was no more than four inches from the post but I guess that's enough," concluded Denis.



Front row (left to right): Denis Potvin, Joel Elliott, Jim Lomas, Drake (Head Coach), Ron Parent, Dave Recknagle, Denis Terry Lescisin, Garth Astles. Middle row (left to right): Clare Leclair, Wade Campbell, Rick Carriere, Garnet Brimacombe.

Terry Sydoryk, Jeff Marshall, Tim Krug, Breen Neeser, Bill Moores (Assistant Coach), Ian Hallworth (Manager). Back row (left to right): Ryan Switzer, Dan Henes, Brad Helfrich, Rob Daum, Ryan Wilson, Brad Schneider, Perry Zapernick. Missing: Bob Day (Assistant Coach), Terry Clark.



Earlier in the game Wade Campbell got the Bears off to a good start when he pushed the rebound of a Perry Zapernick shot underneath Clarkson's goalie Don Sylvestri at the 0:46 mark of the first period. The period ended this way with Alberta up 1-0 and was characterized by exciting and very fast paced play with both goalies having to come up with good saves.

In the second period Clarkson tied it up at 7:43 when Gord Sharp put a screen shot past Potvin. They took a 2-1 lead when Steve Cruickshank scored on a powerplay at 9:12 with Breen Neeser in the box for the Bears. But, just 33 seconds later Terry Lescisin took a Ron Parent centering pass and lifted a high shot over Sylvestri to tie it up.

In the final frame the Bears got a powerplay goal of their own when Joel Elliott scored at 7:41 to give the Bears a 3-2 lead. The rest of course is history.

After the game the Bears were very dejected with the outcome, a complete contradiction to Clarkson's elation.

"It's good when you tie but bad when your team that's tied," said Drake.

The coach went on to say that he felt his team learned from the pressure style game but perhaps captain Jim Lomas summed up the team feeling best when he succinctly said, "We should have had that one."

Game two
Sat. Nov. 7
vs. New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Wildcats had previously defeated Clarkson and thus the Bears needed a win to advance. Unfortunately this one was ifs for the hardluck Bears and they didn't win.

This game drew a similarity to baseball in that if the refereeing had been better, if the goal judging had been better and if the Bears had not gotten off to a slow start. Three strikes and you're out.

To write that the refereeing was poor would be an understatement. This guy fell somewhere between unbelievable and rotten. It appeared that if he saw it he didn't call it and when he didn't see it he'd believe anybody else and call it. It didn't matter who, the crowd, the players, the benches, the goal judge, the goal post just as long as it wasn't him. He apparently felt that in this way he couldn't be blamed for anything.

The biggest controversy in this game occurred at the 10:33 mark of the first period. With the Bears scrambling in their own end the puck came back to NH's Ron Reeve at the point. He took a low shot that beat Terry Clark in goal, hit the post and came straight back out. Terry pounced on it and covered up. Easy right? Wrong! At the sound of the puck hitting the post the goal

judge flicked on the red light and the ref called a goal. The fact remains that there is no way physically, scientifically, magically or otherwise that the puck could have gone in the net and come out the way it did. The way the metal at the bottom of goal nets is slanted the puck would have gotten tangled in the mesh.

"That goal should have definitely been disallowed," said Clare Drake.

"The puck got by me but hit the post and came straight back and I pushed it up against me," said Terry Clark.

The ref maintained that the original shot went in but he was at the blueline at the time and was screened from the play. The puck did not go in the net. Everybody with eyes in the rink knew it. The goal judge reacted to the sound of it hitting the post. He should have been questioned further by the ref but wasn't. Perhaps he would have admitted his mistake for the referee will not admit one he makes, and made.

"That goal was the biggest factor in the game," said Drake.

New Hampshire made it 2-0 before Ace Brimacombe drew the Bears to within one. But before the first period was over the Wildcats had scored two more with only Terry Lescisin replying for the Bears. The period ended with Alberta down 4-2 and this proved too much to comeback from.

"We had a bad start and made some mistakes in the first period that fired them up," observed Drake.

Even though the Bears dominated the last two periods they could only beat New Hampshire's goalie Todd Pearson once more on a goal by Wade Campbell and the game ended 5-3. The Bears, frustrated in the last two periods, missed easy shots and empty nets. The U of A hardluck Bears were out of the tournament.

The Golden Bears played five of six good periods in Montreal. They battled bad refereeing and unlucky breaks. Unfortunately all anyone remembers are the winners and the U of A lost. But they will be back next year and unlike everybody else they don't forget their losses. Don't be surprised if next November they win this tournament. Now they must concentrate on winning the Canada west conference and going to the nationals. But just wait until next year.

Bear Facts.

Wade Campbell was selected as the MVP of the first game and along with Tim Krug played very well on defence. Brad Helfrich and Ron Parent suffered minor injuries in the tourney but they won't miss any action.