

Gateway Sports



Bob Anderson ... one man's opinion

The title of this column is appropriately captioned "How to Win in Three Tries," or "Will Foothills Arena Ever Be the Same?"

This piece is not designed to incite its readers on to a riot, although a considerable amount of mayhem might be tolerated.

Just by keeping a loose ear cocked at strategic locations on this campus throughout the week, I've discovered that a good many people are getting themselves good and psyched up for the playoffs in Calgary this weekend.

Why, even those persons who haven't been keen on hockey all season are busy finalizing their plans for the southern trek.

Those avid would-be promoters Jim Wheatley and Ted Zaharko, along with the athletic department's Chuck Moser are hard at work to ensure that Calgary fans in Foothills Arena don't have things all to themselves.

Between 300 and 400 Alberta supporters will be there waving their "Go Bears Go" banners and pennants. This is such a large number that Calgary's athletic director Dennis Kadatz, being the spoiler that he is, has effectively split up the delegation into four or five small groups, thereby reducing the noise factor from partisan Bear fans.

It's really too bad that the series, or at least a part of it, couldn't have been shifted to the 6,600 seat Stampede Corral. But the uncertainty of dates, the large rental fee, plus the fact that the Dinosaurs would be at a disadvantage on the larger ice surface, made Foothills the best from the Calgary point of view.

However, leaving the spectator element out of it (difficult to do because of the effect of last weekend's crowds at Varsity Arena) the series boils down to who wants it most.

Bears must be mentally ready

The Albertans have had trouble getting themselves mentally prepared for contests this season and as a result have dropped games or played poorly because of that factor. Calgary, on the other hand in the past three seasons, including the current one, have been higher than kites when facing the Bears, a factor which can be traced to the always-present rivalry between the two campuses and severe beatings by the Bears in past seasons.

Certainly, the club who is able to play its own game on its own terms will command an advantage. Bears are primarily a skating team, while Calgary depends mainly on the heavy hitting to get them going. The Bruins made the mistake of trying to out-hit the Dinosaurs the last time the clubs met and the end result was nothing short of disastrous.

Officiating for the crucial contests could turn out to be a major factor, although it is likely and to be hoped that the WCIHL will "import" neutral officials from either British Columbia or Saskatchewan.

Goaltending will be another area which could well decide the final outcome. The Calgary duo of Dave Margach and Gord Konowalyk allowed only one less goal than the Bears' combination of Bob Wolfe-Dale Halterman throughout the 14 game schedule, so there's not much to choose from there.

However, both Wolfe and Halterman had relatively easy games against the Bisons last weekend and looked sloppy on a number of Manitoba's markers.

As far as rewards for the winners are concerned, it's well worth the effort. A trip to Charlottetown for the Canadian Championships, won last year by Toronto Blues, hangs in the balance, and there's an outside chance that the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union may yet win its battle with the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association to allow the winner of Canadian title to represent this country in the World Student Games in Finland, during the month of April.

So, dear readers, there you have the picture at a glance. As far as predictions go, your guess is really as good as mine, considering the success (or lack of it) that I've had so far this season.

As most observers agree, the team that wins that second game on Saturday night will likely be the eventual western champions. They would then have the momentum to carry on into Sunday's contest.

It will go three games, and Alberta fans WILL have something to cheer about on the bus trip home.

Cowtown calls McDonald's Bears

Tough series looms as Western title at stake

Puck coach Brian McDonald is a study in coolness these days.

For that matter he has kept his head all season, despite all the trials and tribulations which were sure to befall and which have befallen a man trying to fill the shoes of ex-mentor Clare Drake.

McDonald this week is attempting to get his Golden Bears into peak form for the Western Canada Intercollegiate Hockey League final series in Calgary this weekend against the Dinosaurs. And the memory of that 9-1 pounding two weeks ago makes the task that much more difficult.

"The guys are in a pretty good mood this week and are working real hard in practice," he said yesterday. "They know what has to be done and are going about it in the right frame of mind."

McDonald didn't get all flustered when the club dropped that 9-1 decision, and in the process, first place, to the Dinosaurs, but maintained that it wasn't the end of the world or of the season.

His prophecy proved to be somewhat correct as last weekend the Golden Ones completely handled Manitoba Bisons 10-4 and 7-5 to take their semi-final series in straight games.

However, this weekend will be a horse of a very different color. First, there is the prospect of playing the best-of-three round on the road. That's bad enough at the best of times.

Small ice surface

But the scene is set for Foothills Arena, a rink in which the Bears have not managed a win since the 1967-68 season and whose ice surface is some 20 feet shorter than normal. A small ice surface can do wonders to frustrate a skating-oriented hockey club such as the Bears.

Then there are the rabid Calgary fans, who up until last weekend had the distinction of being the most enthusiastic in the eight-team circuit that is the WCIHL. Calgaryans now rate number two behind our own Golden Bear supporters, but nevertheless are still dangerous.

Last but not least by any stretch



BILL CLARKE ON THE SHELF AGAINST BISONS
... but will be in action this weekend

are the Dinosaurs themselves. Coach George Kingston, himself a former Bear and a close personal friend of McDonald, has assembled the best Dinnie aggregation in their brief seven-year history, led by the likes of Darryl Maggs, who is certain to be a WCIHL all-star, Dave Smith, a veteran of college hockey and Gord Jones who toiled with the Albertans three seasons back.

Line changes

Although it's a generally regarded principle that coaches stick with the same lineup in winning situations, McDonald has made a number of line changes for the weekend series.

Sam Belcourt, who finally came out of a season-long slump against the Bisons, will continue at centre ice between Tom and Bob Devaney, while Bill Clarke, whose shoulder sprain kept him on the sidelines in the Manitoba affairs, will work between Jack Gibson and Don Falkenberg. The three have played together in the past and in practice this week have been flying.

The third attacking unit has a few surprises in that Gerry Hornby, a centreman during his two years with the Bears, has been moved to left wing, to play with Dave Couves and Oliver Morris.

"It's an experiment to try and shake Gerry out of the terrible stretch of tough luck that he's had this year," McDonald explained. "I talked to him about the switch and he's agreed. There's only one way for his goal scoring total to go and that's up."

Bob Wolfe, whose 1.92 goals against average in six league games was the lowest in the WCIHL, will get the starting assignment in Friday's game, while Dale Halterman will face the Calgaryans in Saturday's encounter. If the series goes a third game, McDonald won't make up his mind as to who his goaltender will be until just before game time.

Time running out

Bear fans are reminded that time is running out to sign up for a place on one of the several chartered buses which will be invading the southern city for the series.

Cost for the trip (round trip) is \$9 per person and this figure includes game tickets. Fans, however, will be responsible for their own accommodation.

More information can be obtained by calling 432-3365, or by enquiring at the general office in the phys ed building.

Men on top

VICTORIA — The University of Alberta's men's gymnastic team, perennial winners in the West, once again captured the team title in the WCIAA gymnastic finals held here this weekend.

Alberta finished on top with a total of 125.75 points. UBC was second with 100.4 while Calgary finished third with 91.3.

Individual all-round winner was Tim Sedgewick of the U of S with 40.25 points. Alberta's Don Meikle was second with 36.65. Gary Balcombe of Saskatchewan was a close third with 36.5.

These three gymnasts will be joined by Rick Shore of Manitoba, Aldo di Giovanni of UBC and Paul Cooper of the U of A to compose the WCIAA men's team entered in the National Intercollegiate Championships to be held in Edmonton March 6-7.

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