

Bears travel to basketball Mecca

Looking for win in toughest gym in Canada

by Alan Small

The Golden Bear and Panda basketball teams are risking some losses to escape the cold this weekend.

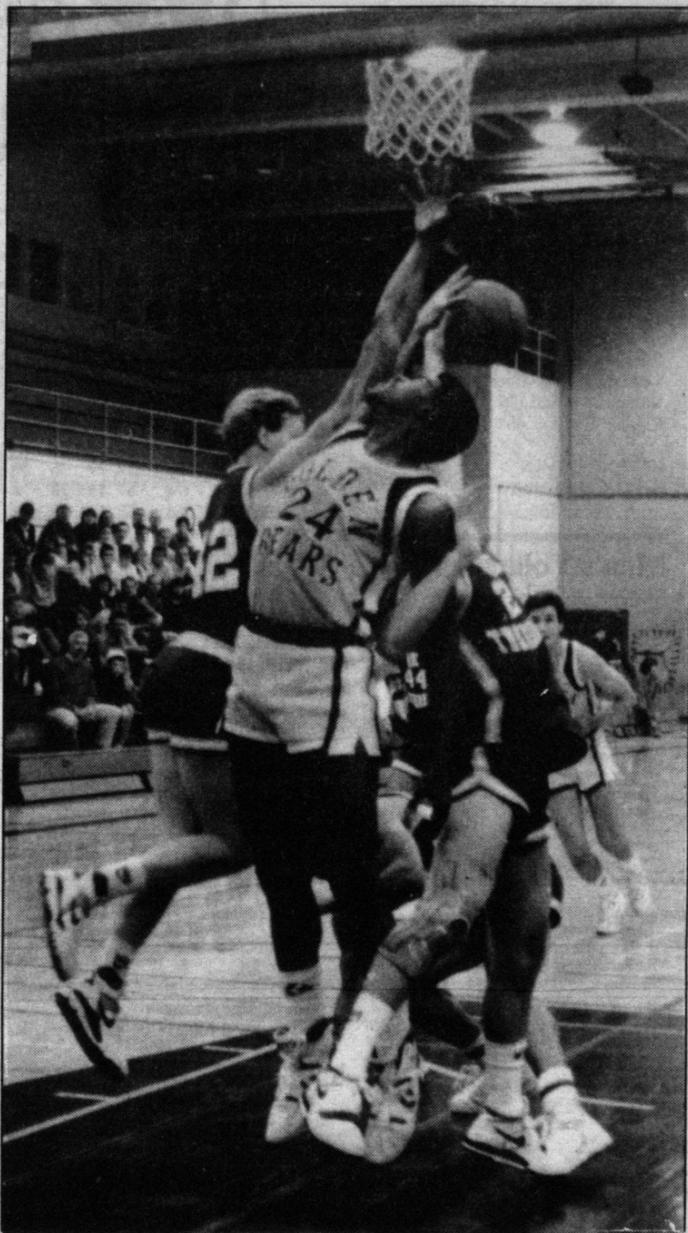
Both teams travel to Vancouver Island, the home of basketball in Canada, to take on the University of Victoria in conference play.

Don Horwood, Bear head coach, coached at Oak Bay High School in Victoria before he came to Edmonton, and says that basketball is treated totally different on the west coast.

"It was awesome. We'd have more fans at high school games than we have at the U of A," Horwood said.

The Victoria Vikings also have the oldest tradition among university basketball teams in Canada. Not only are they the defending Canada West champions, but from 1979-1986, were the powerhouse of university basketball. They did not lose a Canadian title during that time.

The Viking team of 1989 is keeping up that Celtic-like tradition. They are 14-0 in Canada



Bear Ed Joseph (24) has been hauling down rebounds well this season, but Bear coach Don Horwood is looking for more scoring from the fourth year power forward. The Bears face Victoria this weekend.

"Our forwards haven't been productive. We've got to get more scoring from them." — Horwood

West play this season, and although they don't blow teams out like they used to, they still hold the number one ranking in the CIAU.

The Bears are third in the conference, with a 6-8 record, but are by no means in the driver's seat when it comes to playoffs. The sweep over Lethbridge last weekend only assured them of being in control of their own destiny.

"We could come out in fifth place after this weekend," said Horwood, who is hoping to grab a split from the powerful Vikings. "There are so many different combinations that I don't know what will happen."

The Bears have one of the best pairs of guards in the country, but the Vikes pair of Tom Johnson and Geoff McKay match up evenly with the talented duo of Sean Chursinoff and Dave Youngs. Both Youngs and Chursinoff have carried the load for the Bears for most of the season, and if the Bears are to get a split, the forwards must score more points to take the pressure off the Bear, back court.

"It's going to be a difficulty. We need a better performance from Eddie Joseph than we got last weekend," said Horwood of the fourth year power forward.

"Our forwards haven't been productive. We've got to get more scoring from them.

We can't count on Dave and Sean all the time," Horwood added.

Joseph and his backup at the forward spot, Brian Halsey, did not play well against Lethbridge. They won't have it easy against Vic's group of forwards, like Dale Olson, who burned the Bears in Edmonton during the Christmas break, and Wade Loukes, a fifth year forward who canned many a free throw when the Vikes bounced the Bears out of the playoffs two seasons ago.

Scratching your head over the playoffs?

Are you puzzled over playoff formats? Are you in a quandry over who qualifies? Not every sport at the university has the same playoff system.

The top four teams qualify for post-season play in Canada West hockey. The first place team hosts the fourth team and the second place team hosts the third in a best-of-three series held at the arena of the higher ranked team. The winners of

each series battle in the final, another best-of-three at the arena of the higher ranked team. The winner qualifies for the CIAU's in Toronto.

For men's basketball, the system is the same, except the top eight teams in the country battle for the national title in a single knockout competition in Halifax.

For women's basketball

however, the top four teams in the west all play in a "Final Four" type tourney at the gym of the first place team. Another eight team tourney is used (in Sudbury) to find the CIAU's best women's hoop team.

For volleyball, the top two teams battle for the Canada West conference title, but the top seven teams (and the host team) compete for the national title.

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