

Bears eat Birds in hackers special

by Randal Smathers

It was a diamond in the rough on Saturday night, as the Bears beat UBC 7-2. The diamond was the play of the Golden Bears hockey club, especially the power play. Rough was the overall game, as the two teams amassed 144 penalty minutes, 96 in the second period.

It started out as a dirty game in the first period, and escalated into downright ugly in the second. "It was chippy," said UBC coach Terry O'Malley. "Our boys felt we were getting the short end of the calls, so they got frustrated and lost their cool a bit."

Bear assistant coach Bill Moores agreed that frustration was part of the problem, but also fingered referee Larry Antoniak. "We felt that some of the stick calls should have been made earlier in the game and that changed the complexion of the game, and then we became equally guilty after a while, retaliating and taking some bad stick penalties. It wasn't a good second period for anybody, including the referee."

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Antoniak never had control of the game until the end of the second period. As is usual in such cases, it took some major fouls to clear the air. As Moores described the incident, "One of their players took Stacey Wakabayashi into the corner and had him in a headlock and things just kind of materialized from there."

What materialized was a high stick from T-Bird Rick Serafin, answered with a two-hander by Jeff Helland. Serafin then jumped Helland and threw a few punches. Both players received double majors and double game misconducts. After that both teams settled down and played somewhat cleaner hockey, although it was still a hard hitting game.

The Bears took advantage and connected on four of nine power plays, including two goals by Dennis Cranston, the game's first star. He was robbed of the hat trick in the final minutes when he tipped in Stacey Wakabayashi's goalmouth pass just a second after the net was bumped off its magnets. The play was similar to his second goal of the night in the first period.

"Dennis and I have been playing together, going on four years now, so we pretty much know where each other is going to be," said Wakabayashi. "And in that case he got open on the side and I was able to get it to him."

Cranston had two assists for a four-point night, as he celebrated his 200th game in the evergreen and gold. Wes Craig and Todd Stokowski added two goals each, while Parie Proft finished with a goal and two assists to cap the Bear scoring. Scott Fearn and Derrick Wolyński scored for the Thunderbirds, who went zero for five with the extra skater.

Bear goalie John Krill deserves credit for keeping his head in the game on a night where the shots came only sporadically. "They had some good shots," said Moores. "It's a tough game to play when you don't get a lot of shots."

Krill was particularly sharp early. He stopped Gary Cox on a short-handed breakout, then moments later stopped Rob Rice on a two-on-one to hold the visitors off the scoreboard. He was finally beaten at 5:02 of the second, when Fearn was left alone 15 feet in front of the net. However by that time, the U of A squad was up to stay at 3-1.

Proft showed his best form of the season, skating well and moving the puck. "I'm rushing more than I was in the first half, when I wasn't going up with the puck too often, other than the Calgary game (the Bears' 10-9 overtime win on Dec. 4). That was a nightmare."

Proft was a standout not only offensively, but also behind his own blue line and in the transition game. "When carrying the puck, if you don't get over the blue line, you've got to dump it in deep so the turnovers don't hurt you. A good team will go to offence so quick and you'll be out of position, so we've talked about that a lot."

The Bears all pointed to their busy Christmas season as beneficial. Moores said that playing seven games in ten nights against good competition has improved their conditioning.

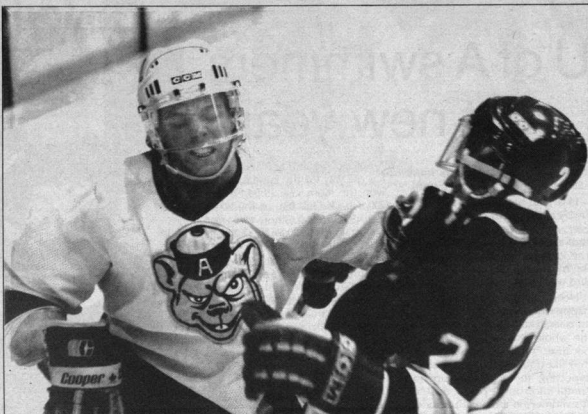


Photo by Rob Galbraith

T-Birds were a pushover

Alberta Golden Bear defenceman Brent Severyn (left) gives Thunderbird defenceman Henry Czenczek a ruff facial in the second game between Alberta and UBC. The Bears swept the two-game set by scores of 12-1 and 7-2. The Bears next game is against the Saskatchewan Huskies Saturday and Sunday. Both teams are top ten ranked in the CIAU.

Proft felt the team's offence improved as well. "We got a lot of work at moving the puck in the two tournaments we were in and we're carrying that into the second half," he said.

Wakabayashi also enjoyed his experience with the gold medal Spengler Cup team. "I think the

biggest thing about the trip for me was the chance to play with so many talented individuals, but also that the individuals came together as a team. It was just an incredible experience."

RED LINES — The three stars were

Cranston, Proft, and Craig...honorable mention to Wakabayashi...best hit of the game — both hard and clean — was the hip delivered by Gord Thibodeau late in the third period...the Bears outshot UBC 37-17, and met coach Clare Drake's goal of about ten shots to seven every period this weekend.

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