

Krill not the answer, Turner had better be

by Mark Spector

It was one of those preseason how-the-team-shapes-up-this-year interviews, and **Clare Drake** was telling us (CJSR Sports Director/Play-by-play man **Blaine Ostapovich** and me) about his defending champion **Golden Bears**.

They had some rookies, some more promising than others. There were some kids that he chose not to discuss. (That is Drake's way of telling you that they might yet get cut from the roster).

The defense will be young this year, and susceptible to a high scoring game or two, he said, not in so many words. "But the forwards will be strong." So strong, in fact, that Alberta would go on to average 5.75 goals a game through their first twenty games.

But there was one hitch. After discussing the individual players, the old master would summarize each department, always leaving room for improvement, but making it sound like not a whole lot would really be needed.

When we came to the goalies Drake had little to say.

There was one slight problem, he admitted. Last year's number one guy, **Darren Turner**, would be unavailable until Christmas. He had fallen prey to some substandard grades and would have to sit out.

John Krill would be the starter in only his second year on the team, A 19-5, 4.11 GAA from his rookie year sounded optimistic, but that was coming off of the bench.

"Could the Bears prosper with Krill and freshman backup **Brian**

Harley?" was the question posed, again not in so many words.

"I don't know," Drake admitted. In so many words. And so many shakes of his silver haired head. But he was smiling then.

He wasn't smiling after a 6-2 loss on Saturday night, however, in which his team looked as if they were skating in sand in the first period. The period ended with the Bears down to the **Manitoba Bisons** 4-0, although the Bears allowed only eight shots.

Despite some bad luck, Krill looked shakey.

Unable to come back against a thorough defensive club, Alberta bowed 6-2 to the Manitoban Herd, and reeled as the weight that was lifted from their shoulders just one night before was dropped squarely

back into position. "The goaltending hasn't been strong," said The Coach afterwards, a quote that has been solicited several times this year. "But if we do have a weakness there, we have to compensate for it."

The Golden Bears clearly haven't. But Krill has helped his own cause little. After a promising training camp, a prolonged slump began with the regular season. After allowing four goals in just 17 shots Krill was pulled for the third period of Game 1 versus **UBC**.

The next night he was sturdy, stopping 22 of 24 **T-Bird** volleys.

Off to **Saskatchewan** - pulled barely into the third, 4 goals on roughly twenty shots. The next night was worse. Pulled and then re-inserted in an 8-6 loss. Again the

rest of the Bears were lackadaisical. The list goes on: against lowly **Lethbridge**, 5 goals on 23 shots one night, then 8 of 35 in the second game; 6/33, then 9/32 (including 4/8 in the third period and 2/5 in overtime) versus **Calgary**.

Finally only 27 saves in a 9-6 win on Friday, only twenty in the 6-2 loss Saturday.

"This team has lost a lot of confidence since the beginning of the year," admits rookie defenseman **Brent Severyn**. "I don't know how things were around here last year, though."

Last year Turner was playing well for the most part.

I hope he can do the same in the second half of this year.

If he can't, Alberta has little chance of defending their crown.

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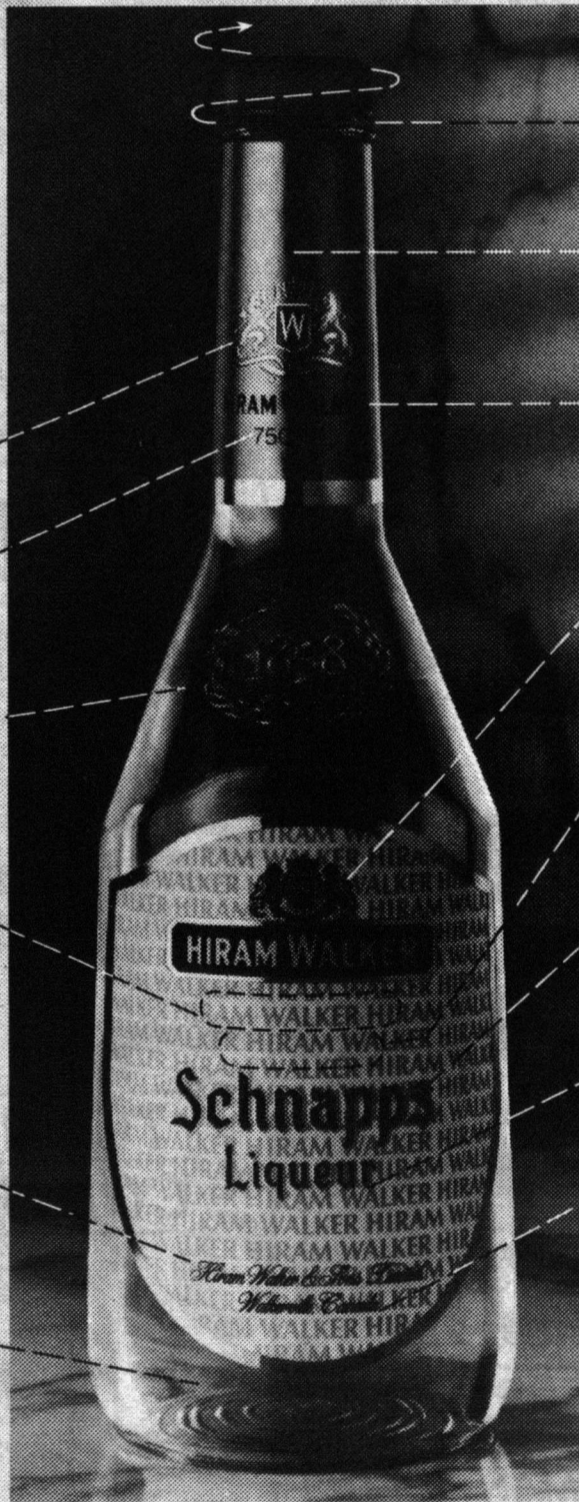
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