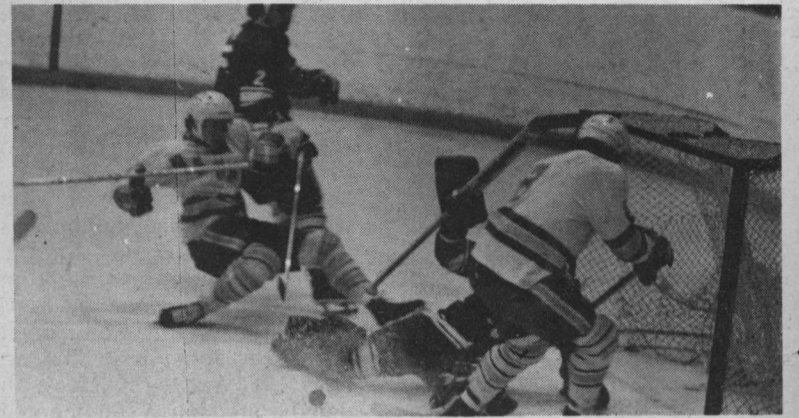




Jam-packed crowds (insert) enjoyed the sometimes rugged action at Varsity Arena last weekend. In one of many scuffles, Bears' Abby Hebert had a firm grip on Don Morris (12) of Loyola.



Brian Sosnowski (8) scores the first and winning goal Friday, (top) but can't beat Loyola goalie Jim Corsi (middle picture) later in the evening. Corsi prepares to impede Clark Jantzie's efforts to disentangle himself from the net (bottom).

Bears win berth in CIAU Championship final

by Cam Cole

"Well, that makes two weekends in a row we've beat the best team in the country," quipped Bears' defenceman John Simkin on Saturday, minutes after his team had sidelined the highly-touted Loyola Warriors in two straight games.

Indeed, the UA team must be hoping the Toronto Blues come into town singing "We're Number One" next weekend - as long as they don't leave that way.

Both the Warriors and the Brandon U Bobcats (who the Bears demolished in two straight games last weekend) scoffed at the Alberta squad's #1 ranking, and both went home with their tails between their legs.

But while the Bears made their superiority obvious very early against Brandon, they never really controlled play against the Warriors.

In the baseball world, they say that "Good pitching will always beat good hitting."

In the Loyola series, Alberta proved that "Good checking will always beat good scoring" - as the Bears held Warriors to three goals in two games, a far cry from Loyola's six-goals-per-game average over the regular season.

Bears 2 - Loyola 0

One goal shouldn't be enough to win a game with, but Bears made it be enough on Friday, neutralizing Loyola's attack with their finest display of checking all season.

Though Bryan Sosnowski scored into an empty net with 15 seconds remaining, the game was really decided by a one goal margin - that one, too, was from the stick of Sosnowski, midway through the first period.

The goal came while Loyola was two men short. Simkin spotted Sosnowski uncovered in front of the Loyola net, slipped him the puck, and the big left winger beat Warrior goaltender Jim Corsi along the

ice, from the edge of the crease.

That was virtually all the offence the Bears could mount, as Loyola also forechecked effectively.

Warriors appeared disorganized under Alberta's checking assault, and resorted to some assault of their own - the physical sort.

Loyola, a big team to begin with, punched and hacked à la Philadelphia Flyers, but referee Dick Currie caught them in the act several times, with the result the Warriors spent a good deal of time repenting their sins in the penalty box.

Half the second period was played in the center ice zone, the other half was fought out in the corners, and the Bears outshot Loyola 4-3. Enough said.

The goalies were superb. Dale Henwood bailed Alberta out of the few defensive lapses they suffered, and saved the tying goal several times in the final period.

"I think we'd still be playing, if Dale hadn't come up with a couple of big saves in the last minute," said coach Clare Drake, a few hours later.

Corsi was outstanding for Loyola, blocking 23 of 24 Bears' shots. Henwood made 18 saves for the shutout, many of them difficult.

Warrior coach Paul Arsenault couldn't recall his team having been shut out in the previous forty or so games, but then, he said, his team hadn't come up against a club that checked as well as the Bears.

"I think if we'd put the puck in the net on the couple of good chances we had in the first period, we might have turned it around a little," said Arsenault, adding that his team had had only one practise since Tuesday, and that they weren't playing together very smoothly.

"We started to play as a team more in the third period, and I think if we can continue that kind of thing tomorrow, we'll win this series," he predicted.

Bears 4 - Loyola 3

Loyola were a much improved offensive team on Saturday. Where they had rushed individually Friday, they came in waves in the second game.

Bears were outfoxed by Corsi on a number of excellent opportunities in the opening period, and Warriors were the first to score, when Steve Benoit was set up nicely by Doug Grills. Loyola led 1-0 after one period. Randy LeMay put Bears

back in the game early in the second period, beating Corsi low on the short side, then Rick Peterson took Bruce Crawford's centering pass and fooled Corsi on a similar shot, putting the Bears ahead to stay.

"We were talking about it between the first and second periods, and the coach told us to keep the shots down. He said he thought we could beat him (Corsi) low," said Henwood.

LeMay leaped about three feet when he scored his goal - his second of the post season. "All I could think about was keeping it low. I kept hearing Coach say, 'Keep it low'. I sure didn't aim it," bubbled the happy Lemay, who saw little ice time in the regular season.

John Horcoff's persistence paid off in a power play goal at 7:34, making it 3-1, but Loyola's Mark Shewchuk closed the gap to 3-2, also on a power play at 9:15.

Then Ross Barros tallied (another power play), at 14:18, banging in his third or fourth rebound, after cutting in from the side of the goal.

At 19:00, Henwood had trouble controlling a rebound, and Shewchuk jammed the puck past him on the short side, after several cracks at it, and the period ended 4-3 in Bears' favor.

There was no more scoring in the game, but the thrills didn't stop.

Corsi and Henwood traded tremendous saves, while the teams continued to physically punish one another.

Arsenault yanked Corsi in the final minute, and only two mind-boggling stops by Henwood preserved the victory in the dying moments.

The same capacity-and-then-some crowd that enjoyed Friday's contest returned (with a few friends) Saturday, chanting "We're Number One" as time ran out on the Warriors.

Arsenault cited the difference in refereeing style, and the great Alberta checking game as the two factors most responsible for his team's loss.

He pointed out that Warriors were missing their top center, John Harris, who was a second-team all-star in the Quebec Conference, and was Loyola's only large sized center. The other three - Doug Grills, Randy Mohns, and Rick Moore, are diminutive, none of them over 5'9".

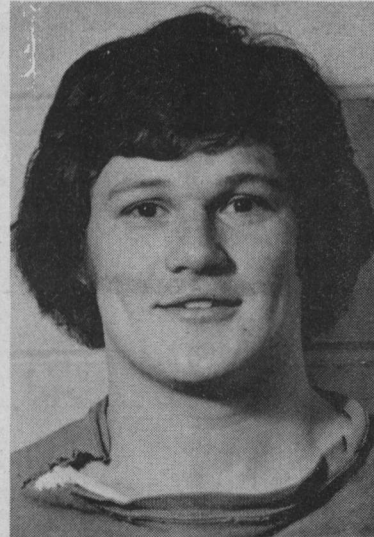
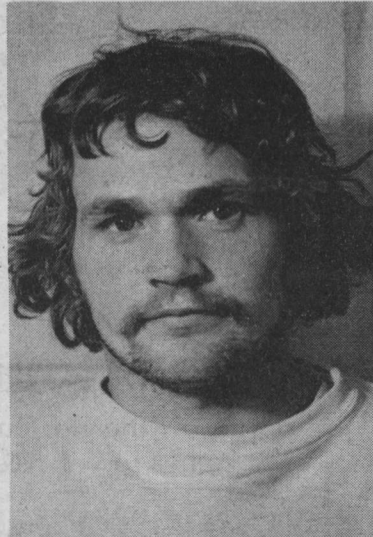
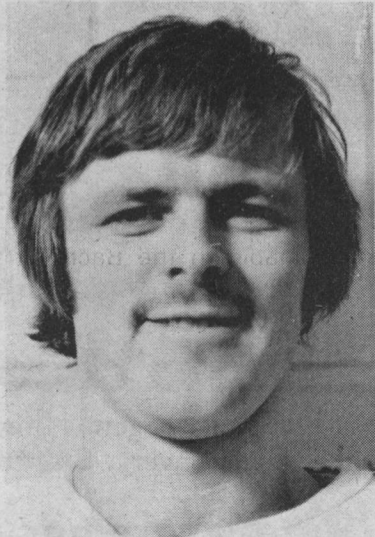
Bears picked up no more major injuries this weekend, despite the chippiness of the play, and the minor ones they sustained hurt a lot less when they won.

Bruce Crawford, who played this series with a taped-on shoulder support, should be back to near-normal, when Bears meet the Blues from Toronto, here at Varsity Arena next Friday and Saturday nights, and Sunday afternoon, (if necessary) for the Canadian Intercollegiate hockey crown.

Blues advanced to the final by virtue of an amazing come-from-behind series victory over the St. Mary's Huskies in Huskies' own stomping grounds.

St. Mary's took the first game by a 4-2 score, but the Blues rallied for a 2-1 overtime win Saturday, to force the deciding match.

Trailing 3-1 late in that contest, Blues scored five times in the final minutes, to win 6-3.



Dale Henwood (left) was a standout in goal, while veteran defenceman Ross Barros and rookie Randy LeMay provided the spark up front.