

A small game that's big
for hoop Pandas —
p. 16

Sports

Bears Gymnasts finally
reaching for the top —
p. 17



Mark Spector

Look who's got all of the fans

You can criticize many U of A students for not supporting the Bears or Pandas teams. But for the ones that are interested, it's pretty tough to dispute their game of choice.

The Golden Bear basketball team has adroitly moved to the top of the voters list when it comes to where the students are spending their two bucks on a Friday or Saturday night.

The hoop Bears, having held down the number one national ranking for almost a full month now, are packing their gym for every home game. That's about 1600 people.

Meanwhile, over at the Varsity Arena, a crowd of over 600 is a good one.

One has to wonder what the two teams would draw if they weren't in a position to rival one another. But that notwithstanding, the hoop Bears have accumulated quite a loyal following.

Those fans deserve credit. Loads of it, when you remember the amount of criticism that I for one have heaped on those that aren't (or weren't) interested.

1600 fans! The football Golden Bears have never drawn more than 500 to Varsity Field in the last two years. Clare Drake's hockey team drew just under 3000 in the Agricor for the championship game of their season last year.

The Gym has been full or close to it for every one of the basketball team's four home games this year, as well as their three Golden Bear Invitational games. And it's loud, too.

These people know quality when they see it. And let's face it — there's been championship puck teams around this campus longer since before Clark Drake was even born.

These Golden Bears are new. And what's more, coach Don Horwood has delivered on those many promises that he made in the formative years. Of course Horwood, who's life's calling as a town crier was sadly missed, has become conspicuously less audible as his team's ability to speak for themselves has increased.

In fact, just Monday he was heard to utter the no nonsense quip "They've still got to do it on the hardwood," in reference to a rumour that Victoria had improved their game and were lying in the weeds in waiting.

Two years ago other teams were saying the same things about the Bears. Then again, two years ago Alberta's chances of defeating national champs UVic were twofold: slim and none.

They've already handled them twice this season, and in five of the last six meetings. These Bears are truly championship bound.

And if you want a seat on Saturday afternoon when the Saskatchewan Huskies come to town for a first place battle, you'd better get there early.

The smart fans will.

Canada's one and two battle in Varsity matinee Biggest since Universiade

by Mark Spector
Huskies at Bears

— Saturday 3:00 p.m., CJSR-88.5

Before we get started here, let's just put into perspective, shall we, Saturday's battle for top spot between the Golden Bears and the University of Saskatchewan Huskies.

Alberts is number 1 in Canada, Saskatchewan is number 2.

Both clubs are 6-1, tied atop the Canada West standings and they each have only two games through which to protect first place after this weekend, the road swing to UBC and UVic.

Second place is almost assured for either club, but number one spot means hosting both playoff rounds, the best of three quite possibly involving themselves.

A kind of a so-we-meet-again sort of scenario.

When you toss in the fact that the Huskies handed Alberta its only loss of the season in Game One, you've got all the necessary ingredients for a bona fide suspense thriller.

Sorry kid, that script's an old one.

These two teams have squared off in so many important games over the years that Bears' coach Don Horwood isn't even worried about seeing anything that he hasn't seen before.

"No. No they can't (give Alberta any new looks)," states Horwood. "They'll do exactly what we expect them to do. Last time they showed us a match-up zone," he says, holding up a sheet of paper with some X's and O's on it. "That's just what I'm working on right now."

That much is speculation. The fact that Alberta's number one problem will be Huskies' post Byron Tokarchuk is exactly that — a fact.

At 6'8", 260 lbs, the national teamer just can't be swept under the rug. And this season nobody has been able to throw a blanket over him either.

Tokarchuk, who is so popular at the U of S that the mascot's jersey



Scotty McIntyre pulls in the low fives. Against the Saskatchewan Huskies, Alberta gets pumped.

bears his number, is currently running away with the league scoring race, averaging 24.7 points per game. That's more than five points better than his closest rival.

He's also in top spot in the rebounding categories, averaging 10.8 a game. And his paltry four assists will tell you that he doesn't dish the ball too often.

"We've got to apply full-court pressure and we've got to make it difficult for them to get the ball to Tokarchuk," deadpans Horwood. "If and when they do get him the ball or shoot, we've got to have the defensive boards."

"That's the key to this game: we can't let Tokarchuk take the offensive rebounds."

Easier said than done, especially

after what happened in Saskatoon. "In that game we were forcing them to take the long shots and clang, they'd hit the rim. But the ball would go right into Tokarchuk's hands and bang, he was slammin' them in."

"That gets very discouraging after a while."

Saskatchewan suffered through a sub-par pre-season in which Tokarchuk was injured and the losses were plentiful. Alberta defeated them in the Regina Cougar Classic by 20 points, but Horwood doesn't expect to see anything along those lines occurring Saturday.

"We expect to see the same zone; we suspect to see that match-up again. We've got to play full

court — offensive rebounds, defensive rebounds... We have to move the ball quickly and get it underneath their hoop before they have time to set up their defense."

Or before their big man lumberers back up the floor. If run-and-gun basketball is your bag, the Varsity Gym is where you'll want to be Saturday afternoon.

Horwood calls it "The biggest game at this university since the Universiade Games."

He's right. Hey, maybe they should play this one in the Buttermere, too.

In The Paint — Athletics is running a **Cheer for Bears** promotion, so pack your pipes and bellow for barleys.

Bears check Dinos, quiet down critics

by Mark Spector
Bears 7 Dinos 3

They came north with no need to say anything, their number one ranking and 19-3 record speaking their piece.

But instead they were vocal — as coach George Kingston was miffed on the radio pre-game show, spouting off about Alberta's pulling out of the Canada West playoffs and some supposed "B.S." coming out of the U of A regarding Calgary's weight at the CWUAA meetings.

When the puck was dropped though, it was the Golden Bears who were doing the talking. Alberta scored three second period goals and two in each of the first and final frames to defeat Calgary 7-3, their first win over the Dinos in the last seven regular season tries.

Calgary opened the scoring on a two-on-none after Bears' defenseman Brent Severyn gambled and lost at the Dino blueline, allowing Todd Savoye to walk in alone before firing a wrist shot high on

Darren Turner. The Alberta netminder had made a habit of late of thwarting breakaways early in hockey games, but this time he was beaten cleanly.

From there on it was all Bears though, as Howie Draper drilled a shot home to tie things up before Jeff Helland gave Alberta a 2-1 lead, poking one past goalie Ken Trousdell from his hands and knees.

It looked as though the Dinos might continue their Bear-beating trend when Robin Laycock popped one past Turner early in the second. But after that, the Golden Bears turned things on, scoring five of the final six goals to cap the blow-out. Brent Severyn (3rd), Dave Otto (12th), Dennis Cranston (9th), Jack Patrick (9th), and Stacey Wakabayashi (19th) rounded out the scoring for Alberta.

Scott Hillier blasted a slapper past Turner for Calgary's final tally.

The real story in this game though, was the checking of the Golden Bears. Paul Geddes

(CWUAA scoring leader with 58 points) was held off the scoresheet totally, as were his two linemates Scott Robinson and Terry Jones.

"We worked on our defense all week," said Severyn, "because we knew that they were a highly offensive team." The big pointman's goal came off a screamer from the point that Trousdell got a piece of, but it was just too hot to handle.

"I've been working on my shot a lot in practice," said the ex-WHLer, "and the guys keep telling me to shoot on the powerplay, so I have been."

The loss was Calgary's first in eight games and couldn't come at a better time as far as Alberta is concerned. The Golden Bears have been taking a large helping of abuse about their decision to forego the Canada West playoffs, and most of the flack had been coming from down Highway 2 south.

Besides improving the Bears' record to 15-7-1, the victory goes a long way in removing an ugly mon-

key from their back.

The Dinos have had their number for the last season and a half now, even beating them in the Christmas tune-up tourney in Cowtown. With the Dinosaurus possibly heading into the CIAU finals as the No. 1 team in Canada, Alberta may very well face them in their tournament opener.

Wednesday's game was a feisty contest indeed, with referee Jim Oddeson handing out a total of 86 minutes in penalties. But the majority of the play belonged to the Golden Bears, as they outshot Calgary 32-27.

With 31 points in the standings, the Bears are just four back of Manitoba and seven back of Calgary. Clare Drake's team has spoken of finishing first or second to quieten down the rest of the league, and with a contest in Calgary on Friday and two to play in Winnipeg, the opportunity may still arise to claim one of the top two spots.

photo Alex Miller