

# 75/76 season- a post mortem

by Darrell Semenuk

The 1975-76 basketball season was like typical Edmonton weather, it was sunny and pleasant one minute and stormy the next. Both the Golden Bears and Pandas had their ups and downs during the year. Bears probably had the bumpier ride.

The Bears had their high points, like in the Klondike Classic in December. The host U of A squad upset defending national champions Waterloo Warriors 86-82 and later in January knocked off the Axemen from Acadia, one of the top teams in Canada 82-81. Maybe it was only when Bears were up against a top team and were underdogs that they played their best games. League play was certainly a series of inconsistencies. Bears finished with a mark of 9-11, the worst in Coach Barry Mitchelson's memory since he took over as mentor of the basketball team eight years ago.

Mitchelson said of the season, "you certainly would want to do better, so you could term it disappointing." At the outset of the year Mitchelson said, "we looked like a third or fourth place team." "Certain factors prevented us from finishing as high as we could. Those who finished higher than us had better inside games, that was the difference. Other factors were commitments we made to some young people." Notably to cut veteran Dan Court and go with rookie personnel. Mitchelson hoped that other veterans would be able to provide leadership and a steadying influence on the younger players. One of them being Bain McMillan. McMillan was hurt early in the season and according to Mitchelson "the crucial injury was to Bainer... he actually only played about one third of the season."

While all of the rookies will gain valuable experience by their considerable playing time, for first year men, Bears could be without any veterans on the team next year and lose a great deal of their scoring punch. Mitchelson concedes only two certain losses, McMillan and Dave Holland, who both used up their five years of eligibility.

Rumor, some of it confirmed by the players, has Doug Baker leaving basketball to test his 6'5" frame in football, specifically tight end, a position he played in high school. Baker was the leading scorer for the Bears the last two years, 4th in the conference this year with a game average of 15.1 points. Colin Fenell has said that he is virtually certain that he won't be back for another season, pending his acceptance into the faculty of medicine either at U of A or Calgary. Finally Len Davidiuk is planning to take a year off next year to travel.

If all those departures hold true that would leave Doug Lucas, a 2nd year man who saw only limited action this year as the veteran of the squad. Any coach facing that kind of prospect would be excused for not wanting to place much credence on rumor. Mitchelson would still have the three rookies he "stole" from Calgary, Brent Patterson, Mike Abercrombie and Keith Smith, who led the league in field goal accuracy. That leaves rookies Bob Baker, whose total playing time in league play was under 40 minutes, and Lowell Neumann, who didn't get on the court as often as Guba. Mark Jorgenson, a 6'6" transfer from Calgary will also join Bears next year. "He has the potential to be

a pretty good centre in this conference," said Mitchelson.

Coach Gary Howard of the Dinosaurs was very unhappy that three of the top high school players in Calgary, fled as were, to U of A and he ha. vowed that isn't going to happen again. Mitchelson agrees that "it's going to be more difficult to get players from Calgary."

The Alberta coach added that "we're going to have to add

to have her team prepare for the opening game after the Xmas break by playing in a tournament in Saskatchewan. Other than that the Pandas practised only briefly during the stretch of over a month between league games. After the two losses to the Vikettes the Pandas played only average basketball and ended the season with a mark of 13-7, good enough for 2nd, but 7 games back of Victoria.

As far as returning players



Tense faces show the strain of coaching. Photos Brian Gavriloff and Gail Amort.

a few ball players if we want to get better in the next few years." Bears can only hope that if every thing takes a turn for the worse that through some divine miracle a few seven footers decide to move to Edmonton and enroll at U of A. If not it could be even a more telling year than '76.

For Debbie Shogan she accomplished something in her 2nd year as coach that wasn't synonymous with Panda basketball for a long time - winning.

Pandas opened the season with one of the most enviable records of any women's team in Canada. The team cruised to 17 consecutive wins including six straight wins in league play and a tie for top spot with Victoria. Then the turning point of the season came. In what may have been a slight coaching error on the part of Shogan, she decided

go, Pandas will be losing Co-captain Deena Mitchell, whose worth to the team can't possibly be measured in points. Shogan had nothing but praise for the 5'4" guard throughout the season, and her leadership qualities will be difficult to replace. Possible absentees are Karen Johnson, who may decide to pick up on a track and field career, and Chris Leiske and Nora Way, whose status is uncertain because of the uncertainty of their academic future for next year.

Shogan can look forward to the possible return of Kathy Moore, a 4 year veteran, who in '75 was the second leading scorer on the team with 8.1 points per game. Then there's rookie Lori Chizik who Shogan says "is just going to be great for us." She was very close to being great this year, despite not seeing an abundance of action

in the first half of the season, and playing the latter stages of the season at both guard and forward. Chizik managed over 100 points and was 2nd in the league in field goal accuracy. Also returning is league scoring champion Amanda Holloway, who, despite a nagging groin injury led the loop with a 17.9 average.

It's going to be difficult for Pandas to finish first next season. Victoria will lose only two players because of eligibility, and only one of note, Lorna McHattie. The challenge for first place could become almost an impossible task if, as rumored, Carol Turney, a member of Canada's national women's basketball team, joins Victoria next year. Turney is without a doubt one of the top females in the sport of basketball in Canada and was easily the best player in the league in '75 when she led UBC to a mark of 19-1. She led the league in scoring (21.1 point ave.), rebounding (9.9 ave.) and was in the top three in both field goal and free throw accuracy. She also had

the most productive night of any player with 37 points in a game against Calgary.

Shogan says of the year as a whole that "it has to be satisfying because we improved on our position (9-11 last year), but I wasn't pleased with the consistency. Its a lot better feeling after this season than after last year. We've got a real happy cohesive group. They're starting to play already."

One thing that both coaches agree on is that the players have to play all summer if they expect to make the team next year. "They would have to play a minimum of three times a week," said Mitchelson. Shogan said without practice during the summer months the players would enter training camp in the same position they did last fall and that the competition for spots is so fierce they might not be able to make the team.

So basketball isn't over for the players, in one sense it's just beginning. The question for coaches Mitchelson and Shogan is who will decide next Sept. that it really is all over.

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