

Bears go into hibernation

by Shaun Impey

What was only conjecture last Friday became a reality on Sunday.

A 9-8 loss to the UBC Thunderbirds in triple overtime mathematically eliminated the Golden Bear hockey team from the playoffs for the first time in nearly two decades.

Coupled with two defeats in Saskatoon against the Huskies, the loss dipped the Bears seasonal mark to 10-12 with just two games to play. The second place Huskies are four points up on Alberta but would get the nod in the event of a tie for second on the basis of their seasonal record with the Bears. Saskatchewan has won five of the eight games between the two clubs.

Sunday's 93 minute marathon — ended by UBC's Ted Cotter in the sixth period of play — typified the frustrating hockey campaign the Bears have endured. Twice Alberta had the game well in hand. They led 6-3 in the third period only to have UBC fight back and score a last minute goal by first star Bill Holowaty to force a ten minute non sudden-death overtime. After the Bears scored twice in the first six minutes for an 8-6 lead, they faltered defensively and let the T'birds rally for goals by Holowaty and Canada West scoring leader Jim McLaughlin.

A killer instinct — and the ability to win when they had to — something that has been a Bear tradition, particularly in the last three years when they have won the CIAU championship, has been noticeably absent this season. They can't turn on the power when it's needed.

For some of the Bears the prospect of ending the season

without a trip to the Nationals may be a bit hard to swallow. Veterans Bruce Rolin, Chris Helland, Mike Broadfoot and Jim Lomas all played on the three championship teams.

1962-63 was the last time the Bears missed the playoffs, when they finished third with a 6-6 record. If they don't win twice against Calgary this weekend it will be their first losing season since they were 2-3 in 1952-53.

While it's hard to find a definite reason for the Bears' decline, whether it was lack of leadership and poor performances from some veterans or the number of new faces in the line-up, a key turning point to the season came in the Bears' first home series with Calgary in January. After dropping a close game Friday night they needed a big win on Saturday to remain in the race for first. Instead they were blown away 6-1 in the worst home loss by a Bear team since the formation of the Canada West conference.

Since that time the Bears have lost five times in seven games and have been struggling. Any breaks always seemed to be bad ones and offensively things didn't click when they had to.

Saturday in Saskatoon the Bears were shutout 2-0, same as in the playoffs last season. The Huskies' goals came on a pair of deflections. One by Tim Leier late in the second period and one off the stick of Bear defenceman Wade Campbell, with less than five minutes to play in the game. Alberta had the edge in shots, 26-23, but couldn't get the powerplay working in the hard-hitting, aggressive contest.

On Friday, it was all Saskatchewan as they outshot the

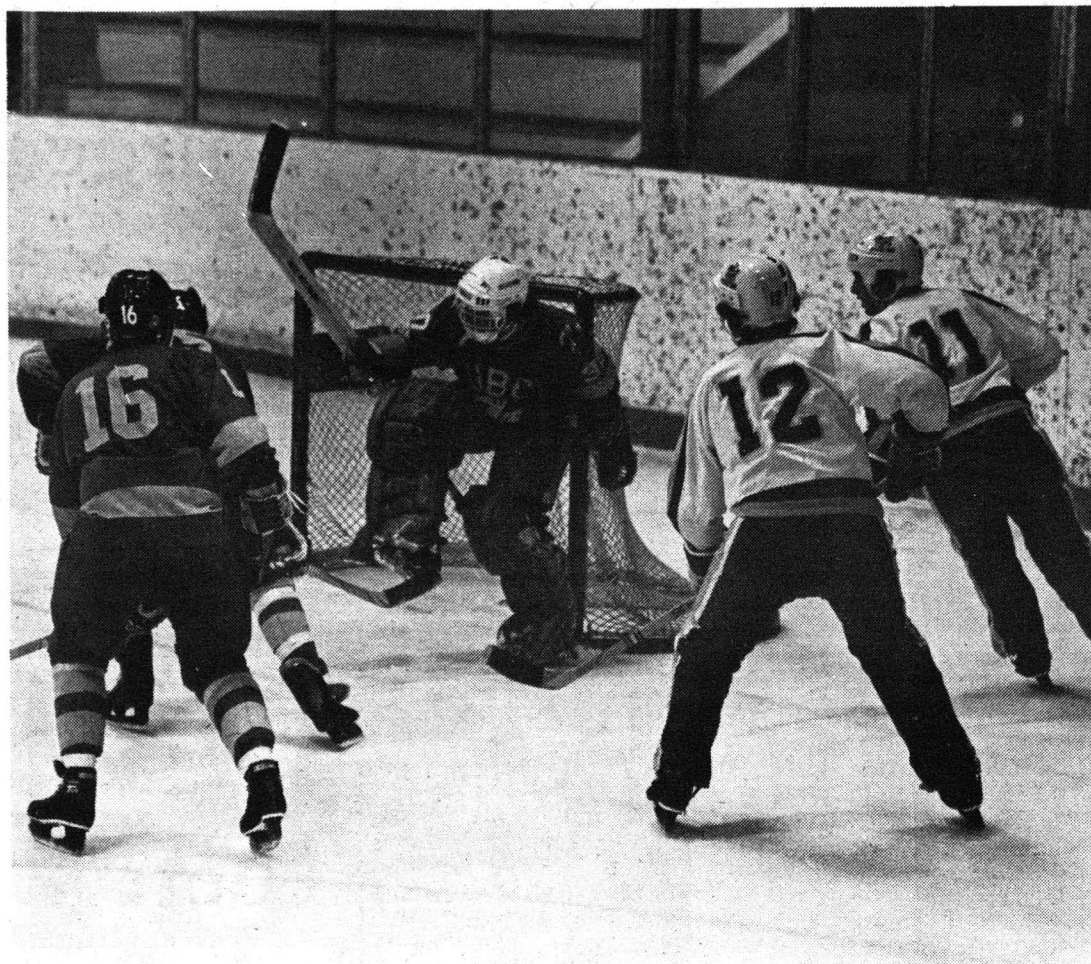


photo Bill Ingles

Although not a factor in Sunday's win, UBC goaltender Ron Paterson will be a part of the contingent heading to Spain. Bear rookies Ray Plamondon (12) and Breen Neeser will have to read about the Winter Games in the Gateway.

Bears 41-21 and coasted to a 6-1 win. If not for Terry Clark's play in the Bears' net, it could have easily hit double figures. Joel Elliott scored the Bears' only goal early in the second period for a temporary 1-0 lead. It lasted just six seconds as Saskatchewan scored right after the center ice face-off

on a hard blast by Gord Cannon. The whole Bears' team seemed to sag after that goal and Saskatchewan caught fire. They scored twice more in the second and three times in the third period.

The only role the Bears will have in the Calgary games this weekend is that of a spoiler. A win or two over the Dinosaurs would give Saskatchewan a crack at first place, providing they can beat UBC on the coast. Calgary and Saskatchewan play next weekend in Saskatoon in the final games of the regular season.

Since the losses to Calgary must still be churning in the back of the Bears' minds, and there are some scores to settle, it will be interesting to see whether they

close out the season with a growl — or a whimper.

BEAR FACTS

Barrie Stafford has been bothered by a bad heel and has sat out the last two series. He will go to Spain and play against Calgary.

The win on Sunday for UBC was their first on the road all season. It was also their first overtime win after five straight losses.

Sunday the Bears got three goals from Helland, two from Ace Brimacombe and singles from Lomas, Broadfoot, and Terry Lescisin.

This weekend will be the final Canada West games for Helland, Broadfoot and Rolin. All three have used up their five years of eligibility. Lomas is graduating and will probably also not return.

Hat trick for mat men

"Guts and determination paid off for us," said Golden Bear wrestling coach John Barry after his team captured their third straight Canada West crown last weekend in Calgary.

Needing five wins in their last round of competition against Saskatchewan, the Bears came through in the clutch to capture all five and nip the host Calgary club by two points, 37-35.

Barry said, "It was the best win ever for us. Because we didn't have quite as many skills as we might have liked we worked a lot on conditioning. We certainly picked the right time to peak. It was satisfying for the team."

While the Bears were polishing off Saskatchewan to win first, Calgary had a meaningless match, as far as the Canada West title was concerned, with Lakehead. Barry said, "They (Calgary) thought they had it all wrapped up. Calgary wrestlers

were spectators and had to sit back and pray that we lost a match."

A key to the Bears' success was their domination of the lower weight classes. They had four firsts and three seconds below 76 kilograms. Calgary topped the heavier weight classes with three firsts at 80 kilos and up.

Barry said, "It seems that if the coach is a little guy, the little guys do better. Of course the reverse is also true. Calgary's coach is around 190 pounds (86 kg) and they won all the heavy classes."

Leading the way for the Bears was Scott Tate. The 54 kilo star chalked up his fourth straight Canada West title and was named the Outstanding Wrestler for the second time in three years. He will travel to Thunder Bay, along with teammates Dave Langill, Shaun Holstrom, and Mark Yurick, to compete in the Nationals in two weeks time. Tate won the CIAU title last year. Homstrom (65 kg) and Yurick (72 kg) won their classes in Calgary while Langill (52 kg) was second. Dave Bush (68 kg) won the Canada West title for the Bears but didn't qualify for Nationals after losing out on 'bad points' to two GPAC wrestlers. Regina and Lakehead competed with the Canada West teams and the top two in each weight class, regardless of conference, advanced to the Nationals.

BEAR FACTS

The Bears were missing team members Earl Binder (86 kg) and Mark Grotski (80 kg). Both had their legs in casts. In their place, Barry took along two members of

his wrestling class, Al Hagman and Bill Lesoway.

Barry received the Canada West nomination for CIAU Coach of the Year. He won the honor three years ago.

One of Calgary's winners was all-star middle linebacker Wayne Harris.

Spain Games roster final

Fifteen Golden Bears will form the basis of Canada's hockey entry in the Student Winter Games which begin later this month in Spain.

A roster released Monday shows the Bears will be represented by one goaltender, four defencemen and ten forwards. As well, two former Bears, Randy Gregg and Larry Riffin, will bolster the blueline corps. Three other additions to the twenty man squad all come from the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds. They are former Olympic team goaltender Ron Paterson and forwards Bill Holowaty and Jim McLaughlin.

Gregg spent the past season in Japan with the Kokudo Bunnies as a player/coach. Two years ago he participated in the Lake Placid Olympics as a member of the Canadian team.

Riffin was a member of the three Bear teams that won the CIAU title from 1977-78 to 1979-80. This season he played for VISIP in the Swiss First Division.

John Devaney, another former Olympian and Golden Bear, opted out of the trip.

McLaughlin is his replacement.

Three of the Alberta players making the trip are in their fifth



Randy Gregg

and final year with the club. Defenceman Bruce Rolin and forwards Chris Helland and Mike Broadfoot will be playing their last games with their Golden Bear

teammates in Spain.

Four Bear rookies included on the roster are Terry Clark, Wade Campbell, Tim Krug, and Perry Zapernick. Clark got the second goaltending spot ahead of teammate Denis Potvin, while Campbell and Krug play defense. Zapernick is the only rookie forward.

Dan Peacocke is the sixth defenceman while Jim Lomas, Joel Elliott, Ace Brimacombe, Greg Skoreyko, Brad Schneider, Terry Lescisin, and Barrie "Big Train" Stafford round out the team at forward.

Also released was the final schedule for the hockey competition. Canada will play in a six team round robin covering eight days. The other five entrants are Finland, Korea, Japan, West Germany and Spain.

Departure date for the team is Sunday, February 22, and they play their opening game against Korea on Wednesday. They close their schedule, and the tournament, on Tuesday, March 3, against the host Spanish club. They also play February 26 and 28 and March 1.