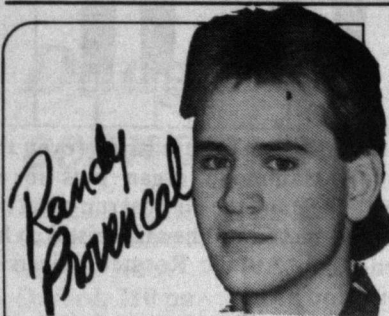


Alberta hoop takes four in 'Toon



The Edmonton Oilers once again proved what Oiler fans knew all along — that they have the capability of beating any team in the NHL. If they want to.

This comes in the wake of the 6-0 pounding the Oilers dealt the Flames of Cowtown Sunday at Northlands Coliseum. One night earlier, lackadaisical play on Edmonton's behalf led to a sound 7-2 defeat they suffered in Calgary.

Edmonton has equal the talent as the Flames, who are arguably the best team in the league this year, but Edmonton uses it only sparingly.

Every gun needs to be fired all of the time.

The home-and-home series characterizes the half-hearted effort the Oilers on a whole have given for the most part of the season.

At the start of the year, most people realized how difficult it would be for Edmonton to regain the top spot in the league. Granted, the team lost its best player to the surf 'n' sand of Los Angeles, therefore the team would undoubtedly struggle at first.

But 20 games into the season would be just enough time for the players to realize the team had the potential to repeat as Cup champions — even without Captain Gretzky leading the way.

This self-analysis happened, and Edmonton turned things around nearing the 20-game mark. However, the team suddenly (as it has the reputation of doing) became complacent. It seemed that because some players knew they had a winning streak going they could casually stroll into any arena and be handed two points, no question asked.

Any Oiler hater will recognize this familiar characteristic; most Oiler fans are notably blind to it.

The Oilers have talent, no doubt. Offence is little problem, defence has grown to three strong sets rather than just one, and the goaltending duo of Grant Fuhr and Bill Ranford has to be rated among the league's best.

Edmonton's trouble this season has been cohesiveness. They've had problems melding into one cohesive unit striving for the same end goal. Big problems.

On Sunday the Oilers overcame that hurdle. They played one of their more balanced games of the season; in every aspect they were superior to Calgary. It was the type of effort the team must put forth every game.

After all, championship clubs are more often than not a hard working group of athletes that work well together. Unlike the days of old, nothing will come easy for this Oiler squad.

Heaven forbid.

T-foul gives Bears a chance

by Alan Small

The hoop Bears were a technical foul from being in a real tight spot for the last playoff in the west. In the end, they swept the 1-7 Huskies in their home gym and are back in the hunt.

With 40 seconds left in the second half of the first game against the Saskatchewan Huskies, and the Bears behind by five, disaster struck the Huskies. Guard Matt McCullough took a technical foul after disagreeing with the officials too loudly. The foul shot, and the following possession allowed the Bears to get within two points, who ended up getting the equalizer and forcing overtime.

The Bears took it to them in overtime and won 78-77.

"We were lucky to win at all," said Bear coach Don Horwood. "In the overtime, they missed an open five-foot layup with a couple seconds to go. We were very fortunate. We were playing very badly."

Ed Joseph led the Bears with 22 points, while guard Sean Chursinoff scored 20, ten of which came off the free throw line, where he was nothing short of perfect. One of the CIAU's top shooters this season, Sheldon Ryma, led the Huskies with a 23 point effort.

"We were lucky to win at all. We were very fortunate." — Horwood

Ryma is one of the few regular players left from last year's Huskie roster, which was depleted by the loss of all five starters, who were in their last year of eligibility. Horwood calls Ryma "a legitimate all-star."

The second game was much different. The Bears grabbed hold of the reins right from the start and by halftime, led by six, 39-33. Although the Bears were ahead and in control throughout, they could never put away the young flatlanders.

By the end of the game, the U of A spread the lead to 13 and won going away, 81-68. Swingman Brian Halsey scored 18 points to pace the Bears to victory, while Chursinoff and Dave Youngs chipped in 16 and 15 points respectively.

"In the first term, we were beating ourselves," said Horwood, who's team is now 3-5 in Canada



Bear Ed Joseph hauls down this board. The forward scored 22 in the opener against Saskatchewan.

West play, good enough for a tie for fourth with the UBC T-Birds, "this time, Saskatchewan did."

Horwood had words of praise for his former assistant coach, Steve Roth, who is now the top Dog at the University of Saskatchewan.

"He's put together a pretty fair ball club," Horwood said, "nobody thought they'd be anywhere near as good as they are."

Not only are the Bears back in

the hunt for the fourth and final playoff spot, they are also looking towards the much cherished third position, presently held by the University of Lethbridge, who are one game ahead at 4-4. The reward for finishing third in the conference is not having to open the playoffs against the Victoria Vikings, who will probably be the top team in the conference once more. The Bears lost three consecutive games to Victoria during the Christmas break.

Ailing Pandas end losing streak

by Alan Small

Despite the fact that the Pandas were playing with basically six players, they managed to sweep the lowly Saskatchewan Huskies by scores of 74-64 and 82-60 last weekend in Saskatoon.

The Pandas desperately needed the two wins to get them back in the playoff hunt in the Canada West conference. The two wins also knocked the U of S out of the hunt for the fourth and final playoff spot.

The Pandas played without the services of Marg Uytendwilligen, who missed the series with a back injury. Celeste Bazinet was hampered with a bout of bronchitis and guard Teresa Diachuk slightly injured her newly healed knee in practice earlier in the week, but both played.

"They got a little better with two days rest," said Panda head coach Diane Hilko.

With limited manpower for the first game, the Pandas played tentatively, for foul trouble would have been real trouble.

"We never really controlled the game until the second half." — Hilko

The result was a poor defensive and rebounding effort against the smaller Huskies. They still won by ten points, however.

"The referee is going to call a block, and that's okay," Hilko said, "it's the reaching in and holding calls that we had to avoid."

Guard Patti Smith led the Pandas with 19 points, while forward Corey Ennis scored 16.

The 22 point victory in the second game hid the fact that the Pandas shot a dismal 38 percent from the floor and were only 13-for-21 from the free throw line.

"We never really controlled the game until the second half," said Hilko, "we were pretty confident with our zone defence."

Joanna Ross led the Pandas with 26 points and nine rebounds. Bazinet also scored 17 points for the U of A.

"We're playing a lot better than we were in the first term," Hilko said, "we played well against Vic and against Saskatchewan."

The Pandas are now 2-6, and host the UBC Thunderbirds next weekend at Varsity Gym. The Thunderbirds are the main competition the Pandas have for the fourth and final playoff spot in the Canada West conference.

Rob Galbraith