

Coaches look at Nationals

When the four teams converge on Varsity Arena this weekend for the 15th annual CIAU hockey championships, three of the coaches will be getting together for something of a reunion. The three are Clare Drake of the University of Alberta, Tom Watt from the University of Toronto, and Bob Boucher from St. Mary's University. The three have been coaching in the college ranks for a total of 40 years. The three are no strangers to one another either, they pooled their experience and talents in the selection of the 1974 student national team and have met each other in CIAU playoffs over the past decade.

Boucher has met Watt's Blues in the national finals five years in a row from 1969 to 1973 and lost every game, four of them by one goal. The four coaches, including UBC mentor Bert Halliwell, who is in his first year in the college ranks, talked to the Gateway about the upcoming series, gave some insight into their teams, and some views on the tournament format.

Tom Watt

Tom Watt's Blues come into Edmonton sporting a 31-13-1 record on the year, including playoff and exhibition games. The Blues had to get by Laurier and then York to claim the OUA crown. The Blues then took on the Great Plains conference winner, the Manitoba Bisons, who everybody expected would be a pushover for the Blues.

"Hey! They were great," said Watt, whose team swept the best-of-three series two games straight, by scores of 4-2 and 7-4 in overtime. "The scores really flattered us. We scored the winning goal in the first game with about seven minutes left and the fourth goal was into an empty net. We had a lot of trouble with them."

Although Watt refused to talk about injuries, stating only that "we've had a terrible year for injuries," he did converse about his team's play this year. "We've

been away an awful lot," Watt said, referring to the teams' Xmas tour of Japan and China. "Out of the 45 odd games we've played this year only one third have been at home."

Watt, like most other coaches thinks the best-of-three series that was in effect two years ago was the best. Is Alberta the odds-on favorite going into the finals? "I don't think there's any question," replied Watt.

Bob Boucher

Bob Boucher's Huskies actually finished second in the league standings in the Atlantic Conference, one point back of St. Francis Xavier. The Huskies compiled an impressive 16-3-1-league record while on the year they were 26-6-1, which includes a 6-0 pasting of the Blues in a tournament at Three Rivers. The Blues had just returned from their grueling trip through Japan and China.

Mac Davis, who Boucher called "probably one of the most consistent players we had" will miss the playoffs after suffering torn knee ligaments in the second game against Concordia.

Balance is the key on the Huskie squad. "Our scoring was very divided this year," explained Boucher. "We had ten people within three points of each other but none were in the top ten. It shows we have depth."

After losing five straight final games it comes as no surprise that Boucher is against the sudden death final format. "In view of my past record it's one of the reasons why I'm down on the one game format. It should be best two out of three. Obviously we have to sell out to the CBC."

Again Boucher concurs with Watt in picking Alberta as the pre-tournament favorite. "Not having seen B.C. and Alberta you have to go by the ratings. I would automatically assume that playing at home they've got to be favoured and we should be ranked number two."

Bert Halliwell

The UBC Thunderbirds are definitely the underdogs heading into the tournament. The T-Birds finished second to Alberta in the league standings with a record of 14-10, overall they were 17-14.

The nationals are not only a new thing for coach Halliwell but for UBC too, they've been to the Nationals only twice, in 1963 and 1971.

"I guess we're at the bottom of the pile because we got in through the back door," said Halliwell, referring to his club's wild card birth. "I guess we're the

longshot, we'll be enthusiastic. It's a new thing for us."

Still, Halliwell is optimistic of his team's chances. "I think if we play to the best of our ability and don't have any lapses and Ronnie's (goaltender Lefebvre) hot, well I think we have a good chance."

Halliwell feels his club's strength lies in its goaltending and penalty killing. "Our one weakness this year has been the problem of having defensive lapses and a weak power play."

Halliwell likes the present format, sudden death final included. "I think that's a good idea having a two game total point series. If you have one bad game you can still recover."

Unlike the other coaches Halliwell likes the idea of a sudden death game in the finals. "I think it's the right way. It gives national exposure on TV. By that time the three teams have seen each other anyway."

After seeing his club lose 9 of 11 games to the Bears this year Halliwell has no choice but to pick Alberta as the team to beat. "I expect them to be the favorites. They'll be prepared to play. Last time we were there was 1971. That experience will help them."

Clare Drake

After just returning from a year's absence from the pro ranks Alberta coach Clare Drake would like nothing better to end his record setting season with his fourth national crown. Drake's club rolled up a CWUAA record 21 wins in their 24 game schedule, and have been ranked number one in the country since

early in the year. The club's overall record this year, including the playoff series to UBC is 28-7-1. Drake took home his 12th league title and will be going into his ninth national final this weekend.

It's hard to pick out any weaknesses in a team that compiled the record that the Bears have. Some of the strengths according to Drake are in the balance of the squad, think that our offensive balance plus the fact that we don't have one outstanding line is one of our strong points plus we check quite well. Our checking has been quite persistent and our goaltending has been very steady."

As far as the format goes Drake feels it's better than last year, but not as good as the best-of-three series two years ago when the Bears beat Toronto in the final.

"In many ways it's good. Both teams are in the same boat not having seen each other adds some freshness, excitement and anticipation into the game, think it's better than last year, gives you a chance to recover from a bad period. Really what you are doing is playing short periods of hockey. I still favour the format of two years ago, think the majority of the coaches agree with that format."

The Bears will meet St. Mary's Friday at 5 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m. UBC and Toronto play Friday at 9 p.m. and Saturday at 7:30.

The two winners meet in the sudden death final Sunday at 5 p.m.

College career coming to a close for Ofrim

by Darrell Semenuk

After winning two consecutive scoring championships, being named to the first all-star team twice, and setting a league record for most consecutive games with at least one point the future as far as hockey is concerned would seem to be all ahead of Jim Ofrim.

Instead the Golden Bear captain will probably be playing his final competitive hockey games this weekend when the Bears host the CIAU National hockey finals.

Ofrim, who was drafted by the Oilers of the WHA and the NHL Washington Capitals two years ago, and has attended both their camps (Oilers in '75 and Capitals in '76) sees little chance of himself starting a pro career.

"Right now I don't think I'll be trying out with a pro team, unless I get another offer over the summer. When I went to the two camps I thought there'd be a chance that I might make it. But I left university open so that probably shows I may not have been that confident."

Confidence was something that the Camrose native didn't have even when he came up to the Bears in 1972. He played only 10 games with the Bears the first year and played for the junior varsity Bearcats the remainder of the season.

The next year Ofrim made the big club and the thrilling thing was just the fact of being able to go on the roadtrips. "I was a little apprehensive then too. I started out playing regularly and I was happy just to make a road trip to

Vancouver and be able to fly on a plane."

Ofrim's confidence received another boost, his getting drafted. "I always had aspirations to play better hockey and then to turn pro, especially getting drafted. I think that helped my confidence, getting drafted."

"Also being able to practice everyday, and coach Drake helped me a lot, showing confidence in me gave me confidence."

Ofrim was more than pleased when he heard last summer Clare Drake was returning. "I was happy when I heard he was coming back. I've really enjoyed playing underneath him. I think he's really put a lot of enthusiasm into the game and it's really rubbed off on the players. I've learned more things under him

this year than in other years."

Right now all Ofrim and his teammates are thinking about is another national crown. "That would be an ideal way to end my career. It would be a nice way to finish college hockey for me."

The Bears play the St. Mary's

Huskies in a two game total point semi-final series, Friday and Saturday. The Friday game is 5:00 p.m. and the Saturday contest 2:00 p.m. Both games will be broadcast live on CFRN radio with the voice of the Bears, John Stott, doing the play by play.

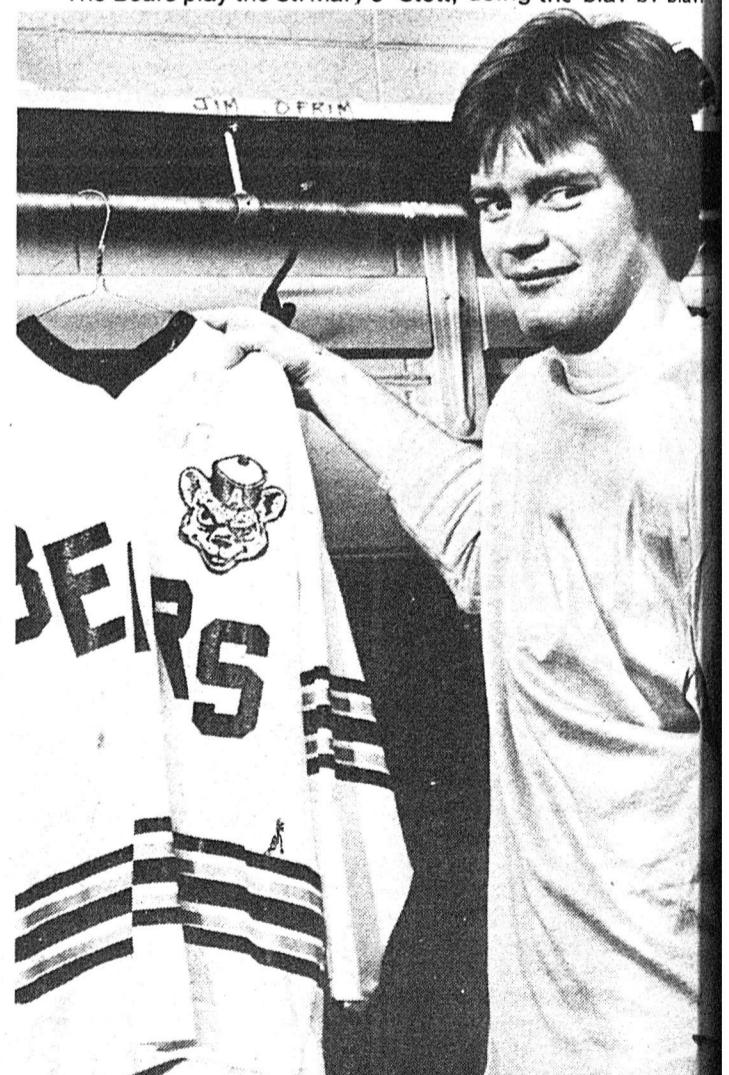
Sports Quiz

Answers page 2

- Montreal Canadiens have retired more sweater numbers (3) than any other club. True or False. (3pts)
- How many different defencemen have won the Norris trophy since 1954? a) 12 b) 8 c) 5 d) 3 (3pts)
- The longest consecutive point scoring streak of 32 games in the WHA is held by what player? a) Bobby Hull b) Marc Tardiff c) Serge Bernier d) Andre Lacroix (3pts)
- Jackie Stewart holds the record for most grand prix victories. How many? a) 17 b) 20 c) 27 d) 31 (2pts)
- Who holds the CFL record for most yards passing in one game? a) Peter Liske b) Tobin Rote c) Ron Lancaster d) Sam Etcheverry (3pts)
- Which player holds the record for the best punting average in one game? (hint: he was an Edmonton Eskimo and now plays in the NFL) (2pts)
- For what NFL team did these players play for? a) Gale Sayers b) Don Meredith c) Homer Jones d) Frank Ryan (4pts)
- Name the sport associated with these names. a) George Jerome b) Dick Stockton c) Gibby Gilbert d) Matt Hagman (4pts)
- Who won the George Halas trophy for most outstanding defensive football player in the NFL in 1971. a) Dick Butkus b) Alan Page c) Deacon Jones d) Carl Eller (3pts)
- Which pitcher holds the world series record for most strikeouts in one game? a) Tom Seaver b) Bob Gibson c) Sandy Koufax d) Don Drysdale (3pts)

Alumni game upcoming

All McNally high school alumni should take note that the 12th annual Alumni basketball game will take place at McNally high school on March 25th at 7:30 p.m. Following the game there will be a social hour and a disco featuring the madhatter.



Hanging around...
Golden Bear captain Jim Ofrim will hang his sweater up for keeps after this weekend.