



PHIL HEAD

**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT** Punter Adam Fragomeni works on getting his kicks away after fumbling on one attempt and having another blocked in last weekend's loss to the Saskatchewan Huskies.

# Controversy surrounds Golden Bear kickers

The startling departure of projected kicker/punter Stephen Wozmirsky left the Bears scrambling to find suitable replacements

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Sports Staff

Waiting for the results of a jury verdict, parole application or paternity test are all exceptions to the notion that no news is good news. But if you're the Golden Bears Football coaching staff after this off-season, you're also likely to include, "hearing from your starting kicker" to that list of exceptions.

After counting on the return of kicker Stephen Wozmirsky to handle the team's place-kicking and punting duties—and not hearing anything to contradict that from him—the Bears were shocked when he departed the

program just a day into training camp. The team was left with no time to recruit a replacement and scrambling to find a feasible arrangement for this season.

"I have no idea why he left it so late. I'd actually talked to him the week before about classes and nothing was mentioned," said Bears head coach Jerry Friesen, who was left with few options as replacements. "Our concern was in finding a punter. I was happy with the guys that we had, [linebacker Scott Stevenson and slotback Damon Fraietta,] but it just taxes two of our key players with one more responsibility.

"Both of those guys are key players in our offensive and defensive

schemes, and both would have been playing 60 snaps a game regardless. So to add onto that the responsibility of the kicking game would've been a lot," he added.

While the Bears did manage to poach punter Adam Fragomeni from the Alberta Junior Football League's Edmonton Huskies to fill one of their needs, Stevenson has still been forced to handle the place-kicking duties this season. It's a duty that the third-year linebacker doesn't mind handling, though he'll need to shake off some rust since he hasn't kicked regularly since high school.

"Obviously I didn't have the time that most kickers get to prepare for

the season, but I feel confident in my abilities and that I'll get better as the season progresses," said Stevenson, who kicked 31- and 32-yard field goals after missing his first attempt from 20 yards in last weekend's loss to Saskatchewan.

"I'm probably the most dressed up—equipment wise—looking kicker in the conference," Stevenson laughed. "But I don't think kicking and playing on the defence is that different from guys who are on the offence and also on the kicking team."

Though Stevenson had a relatively successful debut in his new role last weekend, Fragomeni was touched up for 14 points thanks to a fumbled snap

and blocked punt. However, the third-year education student believes that things will improve over the course of the season as he adjusts to life as a starter on a CIS team.

"The level of football is something that's really different for me; because even though I'd been with the Huskies I didn't get any real game experience," said Fragomeni, who was the Huskies backup kicker and stayed in Edmonton when the team went on road trips. "I'm glad I got a couple of good kicks off [in Saskatchewan] and even though we had the punt blocked and the fumble, it was a learning experience, and things can only get better from here."

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