



FILE PHOTO: JOHANN BROWN

**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN** Dean Whalen (10) has graduated, but he could be back to play in the Bears' alumni game.

# Bears face familiar foes in hoops alumni game

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Sports Staff

During the last weekend of September every year, Golden Bears basketball head coach Don Horwood likely regrets coaching his former players to the best of his ability.

Horwood's current team will take to the court for the first time this Saturday night in an exhibition game against the program's alumni. While the thought of an alumni game might conjure up images of pot-bellies, bald spots and knee braces, the Bears basketball team knows better than to underestimate their competition—that's what they did last year, when they lost to their more experienced counterparts.

Horwood thought last year's loss to the alumni team proved to be a sign of things to come for his 2005/06 squad, and wants to avoid the same fate this year.

"Up until last year, I don't know if we'd lost an alumni game in 15 years. Last year we lost the alumni game and it was a pretty mediocre year for us; we were 10-10," he said. "In my mind, [the alumni game] is a measuring stick. In the years we've done well, we've always beaten the alumni.

Whether we can this year or not, I don't know. I like our chances."

Last year's game featured several members from the 2001/02 lineup, the last Bears team to win a national championship. Guards Phil Scherer, Mike Melnychuk and Stephen Parker (brother to current Bear Andrew Parker), along with post Robbie Valpreda proved to be too much for last year's Bears team to handle.

Although the score of the game was never much in doubt last year, the Parker brothers played a game of their own, trading baskets throughout the second half. Younger brother Andrew said he's looking forward to a rematch this weekend.

"I'd love to [take Stephen on again]. It's a rivalry. We've been doing that since we were kids. I was doing it, actually," the North-Edmonton product said. "Steve was always bigger and better. I want to best him."

With a vastly different team than the one that Bears' hoop fans saw last season—the Bears brought in six recruits from British Columbia—Horwood is optimistic not only about the alumni game, but the direction the team's heading in for the coming season.

"All of the recruits have been

playing well; they're picking up the offence and defence quickly and they've got a great attitude," Horwood said. "Justin Van Loo, he'll give [post player] Scott Gordon some help. We've got two genuine point guards [in CG Morrison and Scott Leigh], who make good decisions and run the floor well."

Parker echoed his coach's sentiments, saying there's a vastly different atmosphere around this year's team.

"There's a lot more guys working hard, there's a lot more selfless guys that know their roles better," he said. "Last year I was a post and a guard, this year I'm playing all guard, so I know the plays better. [Last year] I'd be learning to post up half the time, this year I'm not."

More than anything, Horwood's ready to get his players on the floor.

"I think we've got a lot of horses. Harvey Bradford's way better than last year, he'll get substantial time. Alex Steele's certainly working a lot harder, and we saw in the playoffs last year against Calgary what he's capable of doing. We've got a lot of horses, and I'm excited to get out there and play, see what we can do."

The 2006/07 Bears will tip off against the Bears of old Saturday night at 8pm in the Main Gym.

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