

Hockey Bears fight Dinos for CW top spot

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Sports Staff

The Calgary Dinos men's hockey team beats the Bears in their home rink about as often as the Tories lose a provincial election; however, the last time these bitter, intra-provincial rivals met, Calgary accomplished that rare feat, winning 5-3 over Alberta for the first time in seven years at Clare Drake Arena.

It had been a whopping 38 games since the Cowtowners had recorded a W in the Bears' den, but despite seeing an impressive streak come to an end, Bears head coach Eric Thurston said his players were more worried about coming out flat in a key Canada West matchup.

"Our disappointment after the loss had nothing to do with the streak; it had to do with the way we came out and played," Thurston noted. "We certainly learned that we can't come out and only play 20 minutes or 40 minutes against any team. To Calgary's credit, they did a very good job: they were physical against us they really took the play to us and we were caught back on our heels."

The outcome of this weekend's rematch between the two provincial rivals could very well affect the Canada West standings. Alberta is currently first in both their division and conference; however, the Green and Gold are only two points ahead of the Dinos. If Calgary wins both games this weekend, they will leap-frog Alberta, making this weekend the first in a heated battle for top in the standings.

"This weekend is going to be a great test," Thurston said. "It's a weekend for first place in Canada West and it really gives the winning team a strong boost



FILE PHOTO: JOSH NAULT

CALGARY TAKES ANOTHER PENALTY The Dinos and Bears will play a home-and-home with first place on the line, and the refs could have their hands full.

mentally coming into the second half of the season."

In addition to striving for first place, Thurston mentioned that the previous loss to the Dinos would also be a big motivating factor for his players.

"We have a lot of pride in the program and I certainly won't let [the players] forget how we played against Calgary the last time we played against

them," he said "I know they haven't forgotten, but we need to realize that Calgary is an excellent team this year."

The Bears will have their work cut out for them as several key players are suffering from injury now and won't be in the lineup. In addition to veteran defenceman Ryan Stempfle and forward Tim Krymusa—both of whom have been watching from the stands

for most of the season—Richard Hamula also didn't play against UBC last week because of a bad back and is questionable for this weekend's series.

"The health of our team is probably the worst it's ever been right now," Thurston said. "We'll probably only end up with ten forwards and four defencemen playing this weekend just because of injuries. We're very

much banged up right now; I think I have eight players out due to injury that would normally be playing. It's something we're going to have to fight through as a team."

This weekend's games will be a home-and-home series, with Friday's game in Cowtown and the rematch going Saturday night at 7:30pm at Clare Drake.



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

ABOVE THE RIM Richard Bates (25) and the Golden Bears will be thankful for their home rims against Lethbridge. Alberta is 4-0 at the Main Gym this season.

Home is where the wins are for Golden Bears hoopsters

Undefeated at home, Alberta hosts Lethbridge in final games before the break

NICK FROST
Sports Staff

After dropping three in a row on the road within the past two weekends, the Golden Bears basketball team not only returned home, but also returned to their winning ways, knocking off the University of Calgary Dinos in both games of their weekend set. As they head into a weekend set against the Lethbridge Pronghorns, the Bears are now back to two games above .500 (5-3) and a perfect 4-0 at home.

Despite the success on the home court, however, their 1-3 record away from the Main Gym still haunts them. And while the Bears don't see anymore road action until early January, head coach Don Horwood believes that building off of the feeling of current home success might just do the trick for his team down the road.

"A lot of our guys have never been in some of the other gyms before," Horwood explained. "You know, every gym is different: the lighting is different; the distance of the walls is different—it's not the same

comfortable feeling you have playing at home. Of course, also, we had great crowds against Calgary, and I think that crowds play a huge role. It got our guys pumped up, and adrenaline does factor in. On the road, when you don't have any of that, you have to bring it from within, and I think that, so far, some of our guys are finding it hard to manufacture it themselves."

In addition to a lack of crowd support, Horwood noted that sometimes things just don't seem to go the way of the visitors, pointing out the severe effect that the referees have had in Calgary this season, where the Dinos are averaging almost 18 more free throw attempts per game than their opponents and over 20 more per game than they do on the road.

"Things happen on the road that you don't have control of. For instance, your key players can get in foul trouble; sometimes the calls are a little more dubious than others. You know, there are a lot of different factors—Calgary shot 60 free-throws at home [on 11 November]. I mean, 60 free-throws—you can't even hardly imagine that. So, if you're playing

against them, and they're getting to the line that often for whatever reason, it's going to be hard to win."

For now, though, Alberta will look to augment their perfect home record, as they tip-off this weekend against the Pronghorns (3-5). With Lethbridge only two games back of Alberta for first place in the Canada West Central Division, Horwood expects the veteran-laden Pronghorns to come out gunning.

"I definitely think that Lethbridge is in the same calibre as us," Horwood said. "We have to match their intensity level; but I think that they can be viewed as inconsistent as well. I mean, they beat Saskatchewan on Friday night by twelve, and they lost by 24 the next night. So, I mean, consistency—or lack thereof—isn't just our problem. Lethbridge is going to come in here, excited about their position: they have a chance to come in here and steal one, maybe two. So I expect it to be a tough competition."

Alberta hits the floor of the Main Gym against their southern provincial foes on both Friday and Saturday at 8pm.