



FILE PHOTO: ANDREW RURAK

THE BERGIE SPECIAL Mark Ashton (24) and the rest of the Bears will have to be on target as they host the Huskies in a fight for Canada West supremacy Friday and Saturday in Clare Drake Arena.

First place on ice for Huskies, Golden Bears

Canada West powers set to renew hostilities and shake up the Drake this weekend in battle with top conference spot on the line

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The final month of hockey in the Canada West Conference is turning into one heated race. With the top two teams scheduled to clash this weekend at the Drake, Alberta (14-3-3) will host Saskatchewan (13-6-1) in a series that could put the conference away for Alberta and guarantee them home ice advantage throughout the playoffs, or vault the Huskies into first and start a dog-fight that could come down to the final days of the season.

The two long-time powerhouses of Canada West have become accustomed to battling it out for the throne of the conference for the better part of the decade. Alberta and Saskatchewan have combined to win the last ten conference championships—the last seven of which have belonged to the Bears. Inevitably, an entertaining and

intense relationship has evolved from the frequency the two clubs have met both in regular season play and playoffs. It's a rivalry that Bears assistant coach Serge Lajoie thinks is a dynamic one.

"It's a healthy rivalry; it seems like the two teams always meet up in big games. [Saskatchewan] desperately wants to perform well against us so they always compete hard," Lajoie explained.

The rivalry has grown through the years not by magnitude of the games alone, but the sheer amount of times the two programs meet each year. Including exhibition, this weekend's two-game set will mark the sixth and seventh time Alberta and Saskatchewan have faced off this season. The Huskies currently lead the season series 2-1, while the Bears swept a pair of pre-season games. The numerous encounters—not just this

season, but last as well when the two teams met seven times—have caused some familiarity for the coaching staff, but for the players it's a different story.

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SERGE LAJOIE,
BEARS ASSISTANT COACH

"This year there are ten new players that have stepped into this rivalry for us," Bears goaltender Aaron Sorochn explained. "And they have lost a few guys too. Which meant the first few meetings were a bit of a feeling out

process but now we're going to see which team wants to step up and get home ice more. Really, the newer faces have re-energized the rivalry and managed to keep the action at a high level."

Though the Bears understand how emotional the games against the Huskies can be, the most important thing is having a solid performance to supply some breathing room, not necessarily a conference banner.

"We're not trying to get too far ahead of ourselves, but we do realize that we are four points ahead and that a good weekend from us at home could put us far enough ahead [to avoid being caught]," Lajoie noted.

"We know that if we can put a good weekend together that would put us in a good position to take first." Sorochn echoed. "First place is everything in this league, and we know how important home ice advantage can be in the

playoffs."

Coming off disappointing road weekends in Winnipeg and Lethbridge that saw them upset by both the Bisons and Pronghorns, the Bears know they've been playing disappointing hockey as of late. This weekend should prove to be a good test for second-ranked Alberta to see if their game is where it needs to be for the fast approaching post-season.

"We haven't come close to playing our best hockey," Lajoie admitted. "And we have to realize that we have to come ready to work and everybody has to be on the same page. We're confident that if we play as a unit we can beat anybody in this league."

These are the last meetings between the two clubs for the season, and they're set to begin at 7:30pm on Friday and Saturday nights. The games will also be broadcast on CJSR for those of you too cheap for the \$3 student tickets.

Canada West Men's Hockey

Great Plains Division	GP	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	DIF	PTS
Saskatchewan	20	13	6	1	81	54	27	27
Regina	20	8	9	3	57	75	-18	19
Manitoba	20	8	11	1	61	73	-12	17

Mountain Division	GP	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	DIF	PTS
Alberta	20	14	3	3	87	58	29	31
Calgary	18	10	6	2	68	62	6	22
UBC	20	9	10	1	57	71	-14	19
Lethbridge	18	6	8	4		82	-18	16

Scoring	GP	G	A	PTS
1. Ben Kilgour, Alberta	20	14	19	33
2. Mark Shefchyk, Lethbridge	18	12	20	32
3. Ryan Annesley, Calgary	17	12	17	29
4. Dylan Stanley, Alberta	20	9	19	28
5. Mason Wallin, Saskatchewan	20	13	13	26

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

The Bears and Huskies have met five previous times this season, with Alberta taking three and Saskatchewan taking the other two.

24 September 1 2 3 F

Alberta	2	2	1	5
Saskatchewan	0	0	1	1

•Dylan Stanley scores two to lead the Bears to victory in the Huskie Classic

29 September 1 2 3 F

Saskatchewan	0	1	2	3
Alberta	1	1	2	4

•Three points from Tim Krymusa help

the Bears capture the Brick Invitational.

17 November 1 2 3 O F

Alberta	1	2	1	0	4
Saskatchewan	3	1	0	1	5

•Jeff Schmidt pots a pair for the Huskies and Brett Novak's overtime winner downed Alberta.

18 November 1 2 3 F

Alberta	0	0	2	2
Saskatchewan	2	0	1	3

•Mason Wallin notches a goal and two assists to complete a sweep for the hometown Huskies.

31 December 1 2 3 F

Alberta	1	1	2	4
Saskatchewan	0	1	0	1

•Jesse Gimblett, Harlan Anderson, Richard Kelly and Brian Woolger notch goals for the Bears in a New Year's eve exhibition match, bringing the season series to 3-2 Alberta.

•All three Alberta wins have come in exhibition play, while the Huskies lead the regular season matchups 2-0. Should the Huskies come away with a win this weekend, they will own the head-to-head tiebreaker over the Bears, which could decide the conference.