

Best friends to be honoured by Bears

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SCOTT GORDON

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

Tyson Jones can feed Scott Gordon passes in the post all day long, but it isn’t until the roommates head home that food becomes an issue. Saturday night, the Golden Bears basketball team will bid farewell to the two captains and close friends in their final regular season home game against Victoria.

“It’s been—I wouldn’t say it’s an honour because he’s my best friend and I’m not allowed to say nice things that like—I’m still happy to play on his team, even though I think he’s a schmuck,” Jones says of Gordon.

The two joined the Golden Bears five years ago out from vastly different situations: Jones was a promising guard out of Winnipeg who was looking for a strong academic program and whose coach called Alberta head coach Don Horwood to ask him to take a look.

“I think [Tyson] and his parents had narrowed down his choices and they really wanted a very good academic school, more than a basketball school,” Horwood says.

Gordon was a walk-on from Langley whose mother, then-U of A athletic director Kim Gordon, approached head coach Don Horwood about letting Scott try out.

“I hadn’t heard of [Scott], and I usually have a pretty good ear to the pipeline in BC and I thought, ‘Well, he can’t be that good if I haven’t heard of him,’” Horwood admits.

While both rookies struggled at times to find significant minutes on a team coming off a National Championship in 2001/02, the two would grow up together on the Bears, pushing each other’s development.

“Tyson and I, we feed off each other. He’s one of the hardest working guys on the team and to be around that environment spawns new development on yourself,” Gordon says.

“[Scott]’s a measuring stick for what we have to do to better ourselves,” Jones adds.

“He’s not exactly one for the words who’ll give you a motivational speech and get you pumped up, but you know that every night he’s going to bring that consistent effort, and that’s something that all the guys on our team should take [as a lesson]: to always bring that high intensity level that he does.”

As they progressed in their skills, Gordon found himself thrust into the spotlight at the end of the 2003/04 season when all-Canadian Phil Sudol went down with a knee injury in the first round of the playoffs.

“I knew that I could bank on Sudol to be there; that he would draw a lot of attention, and that would leave me wide open,” says Gordon, who averaged 11.2 points and 6.3 rebounds

in six playoff starts. “When he went down, someone had to take on that role of being double-teamed and I wanted that bad, so there was all the drive and the fire in the world to get me going in the right direction, and it was just hard work that got me there.”

“A good player will rise to the occasion and [when Sudol got hurt, Scott] had to get better and he did get better,” Horwood adds.

While Gordon became a focal point in the offence as he progressed, Jones often went the other way, battling injuries and stepping aside to let talent scorers like Dean Whalen, Alex Steele and CG Morrison take more active roles. He was also asked to play out of position at point guard during the 2005/06 season.

“The addition of CG and Alex Steele has been tremendous for our team because they can score,” Jones says. “It’s less of a burden on me; I can create for others, create for the post players, focus on leading the team, running the plays, playing better defence, rebounding and we can play more of a team game.”

“He sacrificed to a certain extent—he’s not a natural point guard—and he did whatever he had to do for the team. If it was point guard, fine; if it was guard a post, fine,” Horwood adds.

As big as Gordon’s game is on the court, it’s his work ethic off it that makes him stand out; he’s a quiet, lead-by-example player whose hard work is lauded by coaches and teammates, encouraging the latter to match his intensity.

“Lots of people view leadership as yelling and screaming and getting after guys to work hard; Scott doesn’t do that. He just works hard and it embarrasses his teammates when they don’t [do the same],” Horwood says.

Jones, in contrast, will talk to just about anyone in almost any situation, and will often interrupt a post-game conversation or interview, usually to crack a joke.

“A lot of the guys really look up to Tyson [for his] work ethic and his attitude, so he’s an important part of trying to get everyone on the same page and, when guys are

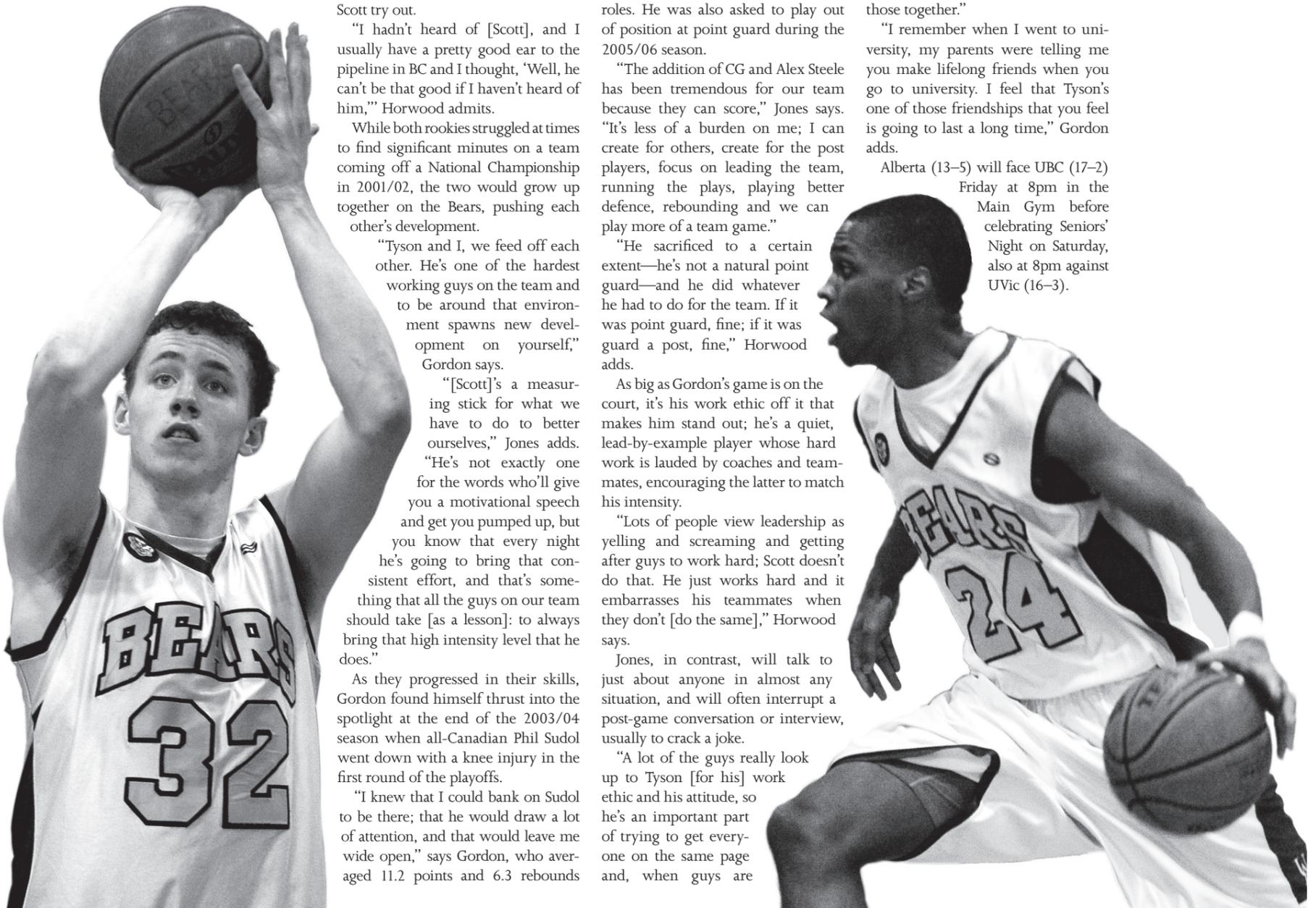
slacking off, giving them a kick in the ass; they take to him for that,” Gordon explains.

As the pair’s CIS careers wind down, both reflected that their relationship has been one of the best things to come out of their time as Golden Bears.

“There’s no other person I’d rather spend [the seniors’ farewell] with,” Jones says. “We’ve been through the ups and downs in our five years here: when we go through a bad loss, we’re the guys after the game spending time with each other, and when we’ve had the big wins—like Canada West Championships—we’ve celebrated those together.”

“I remember when I went to university, my parents were telling me you make lifelong friends when you go to university. I feel that Tyson’s one of those friendships that you feel is going to last a long time,” Gordon adds.

Alberta (13–5) will face UBC (17–2) Friday at 8pm in the Main Gym before celebrating Seniors’ Night on Saturday, also at 8pm against UVic (16–3).



PHOTOS: PETE YEE

Scott Gordon

6’7”, 225 pounds
3/6/1984
Fourth-year Business student
Brookwood Secondary
Langley, British Columbia

Year	GP	MPG	RPG	APG	BPG	SPG	PPG
2002/03	10	7.0	1.5	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.9
2003/04	19	12.0	3.4	0.7	0.2	0.1	3.2
2004/05	16	24.6	4.0	0.6	0.7	0.5	11.8
2005/06	20	29.4	5.9	1.4	0.4	1.1	14.0
2006/07	18	30.6	4.8	1.7	0.7	0.9	14.7
Career	83	22.1	4.2	1.0	0.5	0.6	9.7

Year	GP	MPG	RPG	APG	BPG	SPG	PPG
2002/03	13	11.0	1.5	0.5	0.2	0.5	2.1
2003/04	20	17.4	2.4	1.6	0.6	0.9	4.9
2004/05	18	16.9	1.2	1.2	0.1	1.2	2.8
2005/06	20	24.4	2.9	3.4	0.7	1.5	5.8
2006/07	12	23.1	3.4	2.7	0.5	1.8	5.8
Career	83	18.8	2.5	2.0	0.4	1.2	4.3

Tyson Jones

6’4”, 205 pounds
9/13/1984
Fourth-year Arts student
Oak Park High School
Winnipeg, Manitoba