

Pronghorns embarrass puck Bears in sweep

ROSS PRUSAKOWSKI
Sports Staff

On one side were the reigning two-time CIS champions, already having clinched first place in the Mountain Division. Opposite were the perennial doormats of Canada West hockey—a team that hasn't sniffed a playoff spot in four years. The weekend series looked like a mismatch of epic proportions, so it was no surprise that the weekend ended in a sweep.

What was shocking was that it was the Lethbridge Pronghorns (11–9–4) who were celebrating a pair of wins and the end of a couple of historic streaks after they dominated a lethargic Golden Bears hockey squad 3–1 Friday and came from behind to win 4–3 in a shootout on Saturday.

The win on Friday night marked the Pronghorns' first victory in Clare Drake Arena since 15 October, 1999—a span of 17 games. After ending their futility streak in Edmonton, the Pronghorns established a winning one, recovering from a 3–0 deficit to tie the Bears in Saturday's game before winning 2–1 in a shootout. It was the first time a visiting team had swept in the Drake since 20/21 January 1995, when the same Lethbridge program pulled off the feat.

"[Lethbridge] has improved a lot and they're a good team, so we have to match their level of intensity and their work ethic—and if we don't [the sweep] is going to be the result. They outworked us [this weekend]," Bears head coach Eric Thurston said. "Nothing's going to come easy and if we don't come out and play hard."

"We want to be something different and we're a team that's still kind of finding ourselves really," Lethbridge head coach Greg Gatto added. "You watch the U of A and they expect to



ANDREW RURAK

DIDN'T SHUT IT QUICK ENOUGH Steve Zmudczynski squeezes one through Aaron Sorochan's five hole for Lethbridge's first goal in Saturday's shootout.

win every night. We expect to win maybe 50 per cent of the time—we hope to win 50 per cent of the time—but we're getting better. We've definitely found ways to win [this year] rather than ways to give games up."

While Alberta could be expected to be sluggish coming off the bye week, they certainly didn't look it leaving the locker room. In both contests, the Bears jumped out to one-goal leads by the end of the first minute of play and

were up three goals seven minutes into the game on Saturday.

However, the combination of a hideous power play that went 0–12 on the weekend and a penalty kill that gave up five goals on 13 chances killed the Bears at key points. When Alberta looked to be on the verge of running with it early in both games, an ill-timed penalty or weightless power play sapped their momentum and allowed the Pronghorns to stay close.

"Our penalty killing isn't doing a very good job, and our power play is struggling a little bit," Thurston said. "Other teams, when they drop a man and are penalty killing, they bring their intensity up and I think that we've kept ours the same. They're very resilient, and they're a very good team, and we let them stay in the games."

While the humbling losses marked the end of another long pair of streaks, Thurston isn't concerned about the

effect they'll have as the team drives towards the playoffs and try to capture a third-straight CIS National title.

"This is a good test for us; it's adversity at it's finest, and we have to get through it as a team, and we can't point the fingers at anybody," Thurston said. "I don't worry about the streaks. The only streak I worry about is the one about the national championships. Otherwise, streaks are for statisticians and newspaper guys."



MIKE OTTO

TOO MUCH BAD DEFENCE, NOT ENOUGH BUCKETS Scott Gordon (green) shoots over Victoria's Rob Kinnear. Alberta lost 83–70 after a very slow start.

Hoops Bears suffer 'shitty' weekend

Lack of hustle costs Alberta against UBC on Friday and Victoria on Saturday

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

A pair of weak starts against two of the best teams in the country left the Golden Bears basketball squad (13–7) hanging their heads this weekend.

Falling behind by ten at half to the UBC Thunderbirds (17–2) Friday and nine to the Victoria Vikes (16–3) on Saturday left Alberta in holes that they couldn't dig themselves out of.

"Both nights we came out slow and it hurt us because both games, the whole game, we were just trying to climb back into it, and once we did, both teams would go on a run and we'd lose it," fifth-year guard Tyson Jones said.

The Bears made a run at the Thunderbirds in the second half of Friday's game as CG Morrison drilled a trifecta of three-pointers to start the half and cut the lead to one, but Alberta was unable to complete the comeback, ultimately losing 71–67.

"We lost it at the free-throw line and missed layups," said Bears head coach Don Horwood, whose team shot 16–26 from the charity stripe and .400 from the field. Both numbers are well down for Alberta, who leads the country in field-goal and three-point percentage, and is 13th

in free-throw shooting.

"We missed a lot of open shots; guys who've been shooting the ball well didn't do it tonight. We didn't play as relaxed as we needed to. We battled hard and gave ourselves a chance to win," Horwood said.

Saturday night was a different story for Alberta, as the Bears were unable to claw their way back against UVic and lost 83–70 in a game in which Horwood felt his team played "shitty."

"I'm really disappointed in the way we played this weekend," he said. "Tonight we didn't even battle. Full credit to Victoria, they're a good basketball team, but the way we started the game—turning over the ball, bad decisions—is just very disappointing."

"We didn't have it from the very get-go, and they couldn't miss; their shots were on a wire," added fifth-year post Scott Gordon, who—along with Jones—was in his last regular-season home game.

The Vikes outplayed the Golden Bears at both ends of the floor, outrebounding Alberta and shooting a sparkling .620 from the floor. For Victoria head coach Craig Beaucamp, it was a convincing win in a difficult situation.

"Anytime you get a road win in Alberta, you're pretty happy; it's not an easy place to win," he said. "We

looked determined out there tonight. A lot of second-night games aren't about Xs and Os but about heart and work ethic."

Work ethic was something the Bears were sorely lacking once again, especially on the defensive end where they managed only nine steals and allowed four Vikes to reach double figures in scoring, lead by second-year forward Jacob Doerksen.

"These guys don't take a play off; they're working hard every single play; they're always in good positions and they always make smart plays. If a guy's slacking off, they'll take advantage of it," Jones explained.

"I was looking forward to these two games more than any other weekend of the whole year, so you can imagine how disappointed I am with this [result]," Gordon added.

Coupled with Saskatchewan's victory over UBC and loss to Victoria, the Bears now hold a tenuous, one-game lead over Saskatchewan for first place in the Central Division with one week left to play. Luckily for Alberta, they also hold the head-to-head tiebreaker against the Huskies, so one win over Lethbridge or a Husky loss to Calgary next weekend will clinch the division, and a first-round bye in the playoffs, for the Golden Bears.