

# Ashton goal sends hockey Bears to CW final

TREVOR PHILLIPS  
Sports Writer

The Alberta Golden Bears are off to their ninth-consecutive Canada West final, while the UBC Thunderbirds are heading home believing they should have been able to come out on top.

The T-Birds did everything they possibly could to delay a speedy Bears attack on Friday night and lasted until five minutes into the second period, when Alberta scored three goals in an astounding 44 seconds to spur a 5-1 victory. Saturday, UBC had more jump in their step, but with 6:17 left to play, Bears rookie defenceman Mark Ashton scored the go-ahead goal with a slap-shot that beat Thunderbirds goalie Gerry Festa high on the glove-side and ended UBC's season.

"I thought our guys battled and competed this weekend, and I give them a lot of credit," T-Birds head coach Milan Dragicevic said while forcing back tears. "But penalties killed us all year, and they ended up

biting us in the end."

On Friday night, it was speedsters Dale Mahovsky and Dylan Stanley wreaking havoc, as the duo combined for four points. The T-Birds couldn't contain the Alberta forwards and wound up surrendering 41 shots on Festa and drawing nine penalties.

"We really brought our level up when it mattered," Bears head coach Eric Thurston said of his team's scoring burst. "That has a lot to do with experience and veteran guys who really want to win."

"The swagger [of a winning team] should always be there and be present in all the decisions we make," Bears assistant coach Serge Lajoie added.

On Saturday night, UBC checked the Bears much tighter and was able to neutralize some of the quicker Alberta forwards; however, the Thunderbirds still found themselves shorthanded eleven times, though they didn't allow a goal in ten of them. Still, as the game neared its end, the Alberta forecheck wore down the UBC defencemen, which led to Ashton's game winner. Rookie

forward Jesse Gimblett stole the puck in the UBC end and fed it to Ashton, who pounded it past Festa.

"We are a well-conditioned team, and it just wears a team down when you can establish an up-tempo fore-check," Lajoie said. "I call it the 'White Wave,' and we had it going for the last 14 minutes of tonight's game."

"[UBC] was coming off three games last week and the game [Friday], so we wanted to make them work and make them skate," Bears goaltender Aaron Sorochoan explained. "We don't want to play hockey on a Sunday here, so we worked hard for the win."

The close result of Saturday's contest left the Thunderbirds, who felt they played well enough to force a third game, disappointed in the early end to their season.

"We are not happy or content with the second round," Dragicevic said. "They had puck-luck and we didn't; I thought we played well and deserved to win."

"We did deserve to win; we wanted it more than them," UBC captain Brad



STEFFI ROSSKOPF

**STANDING TALL** Aaron Sorochoan (30) allowed only two goals this weekend.

Zanon concurred. "[Alberta] just capitalized on their chances."

The Bears will now move on to the CanWest Final for the eleventh consecutive season, where they'll face the

Saskatchewan Huskies for the sixth straight time. Also, the Bears pushed their post-season winning streak to 16 games and haven't lost at home to UBC since 21 November, 1998.



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