

## Football Bear working hard in the Big Easy

ROBIN COLLUM  
Sports Editor

For most CIS football players, getting drafted to the CFL would be the pinnacle of their athletic career. But for one lucky Golden Bear, a career in Canada is only the backup plan. Not only was Alberta's Patrick MacDonald a third-round pick in the CFL draft, he's signed a free-agent contract with the NFL's New Orleans Saints and is currently in Louisiana trying out with the team.

A walk-on recruit in 2005, MacDonald has played as both a defensive lineman and long-snapper, but it's in the latter capacity that he's so sought-after. In his two seasons here, he's never missed a snap on special teams.

MacDonald will spend the summer trying out with the Saints.

"This is the greatest opportunity I could ever have, and ever will have, probably," MacDonald said. "I'm very excited."

Bears head coach Jerry Friesen wasn't surprised that MacDonald has been getting such attention.

"He has a particular skill, and he has perfected that skill," Friesen said. "That's what makes him better than a lot of the players out there."

Though CIS has produced 23 NFL players since 1945, this is only the second time that a Golden Bear has had a chance to play for an American team. In 1976, Brian Fryer was selected in the eighth round by the Washington Redskins. Friesen thinks



FILE PHOTO: NICK WIEBE

**OH, SNAP!** Alberta long-snapper Patrick MacDonald has both the Calgary Stampeders and the NFL's New Orleans Saints interested in his skills.

that MacDonald's success could get more American eyes looking north for players.

"This shows really well for our program," Friesen said. "It's more profile for us. I've had several calls from NFL teams and the NFL governing office. I think it [brings attention to]

CIS, period," he said. "They see these Canadians with the special skills and maybe say, 'Hey, what have we been missing?'"

MacDonald has had a busy schedule so far, but has been enjoying himself.

"It's the experience of a lifetime. It's a completely different world out here,"

he said. "The facility is top rate, as is the training and the coaching. I hadn't really been outside of the camp and the airport area until today," he said on the phone from Bourbon Street. "It's the first time we've had some time off, so we came down to have lunch here."

If he doesn't make it past training

camp, MacDonald will come back north to the CFL.

"If things don't work out for me then of course I'll go down to play with Calgary, but for the moment that's just at the back of my mind. Right now I'm concentrating on getting on this roster."

## New hoops Bear follows his father onto the court

PAUL OWEN  
Managing Editor

Though he has yet to play a game for the U of A hoops squad, incoming forward James Suderman has already earned a new nickname: "Mike."

You'll have to excuse head coach Don Horwood for calling Edmonton native James by his father's name a time or two. After all, he's more familiar with the basketball exploits of the elder Suderman—who played for the Golden Bears in the mid-1980s—than those of James, whose addition makes the Sudermans the first father-son combo to play for Horwood. However, if Suderman lives up to his potential, which Horwood noted is "tremendous," he shouldn't have any trouble stepping out of his father's shadow.

"I believe James Suderman is going to be very good; how much he's going to be able to help us this first year is hard to say," Horwood said. "He's got a tremendous work ethic [and his] skills are very good. He came from Strathcona high school, where he wasn't surrounded with many good players. Consequently, he's under the radar a little bit because his team didn't play very well."

In addition to the 6'5" Suderman, Alberta also added 6'7" post Patrick Maloney from Augustana, a player who Horwood sees as a centre in the future; and 6'5" Braydon Janzen, a post from Camosun College in Victoria who played with current Bear Eric Casey in high school. The three interior players should give the Bears plenty of options to fill the void of graduated all-star Scott Gordon.

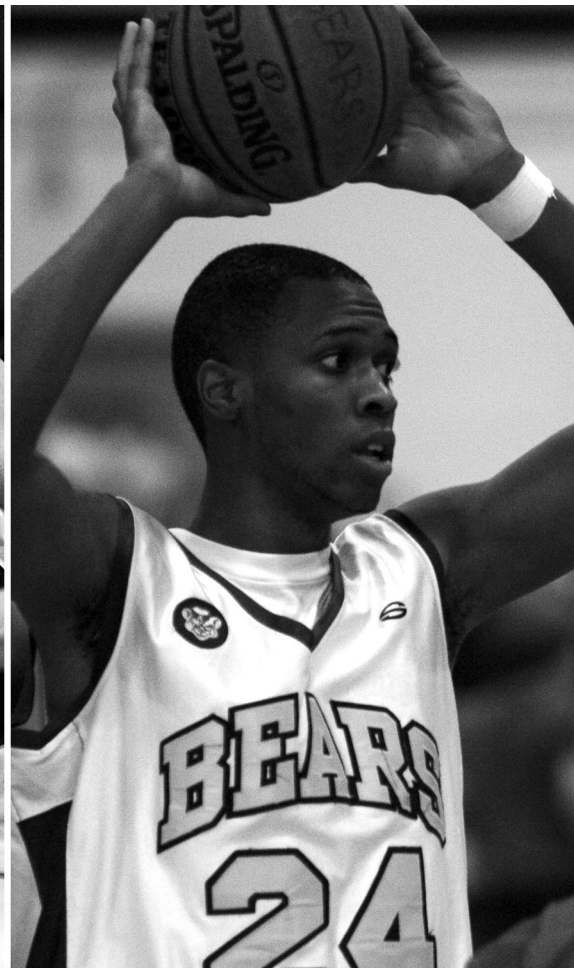
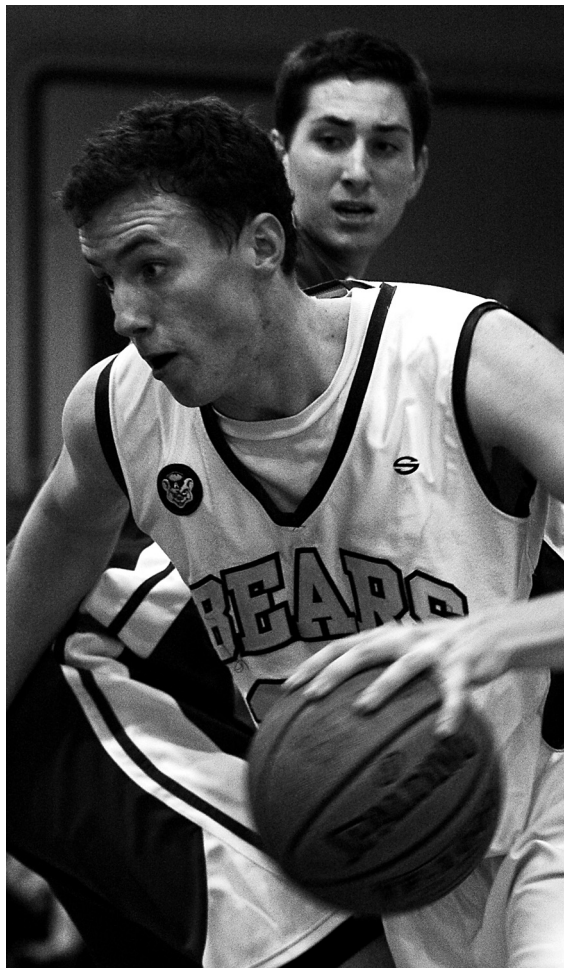
"If he can pick up where he left off at Camosun, Braydon Janzen could challenge Justin [Van Loo] and James [Suderman]—and we have Harvey Bradford in the mix there too—at the four spot. It makes us fairly deep at that spot, so it's going to be kind of a battle for playing time amongst those guys," Horwood explained.

The Bears have also nabbed German import Patrick Unger, who played last season at Grant MacEwan. Unger is a defensive stopper who will see some time as the third guard as Alberta looks to replace starter Tyson Jones, who also graduated.

"Patrick Unger is an all-purpose player; he can fit in and do whatever you need him to do," Horwood said. "He can guard a four-man; he can guard a three-man. His scoring is a little suspect—I think he has the skills to score, but I don't think he has a scorer's mentality."

The Bears also have a few options from the bench to fill Jones' shoes: Neb Aleksic and Scott Leigh will both be looking for more playing time this season, and Andrew Parker's continued improvement will ensure he gets some serious minutes this year. While the Bears had trouble replacing Jones when he was injured early last season, Horwood pointed out that it wasn't due to a lack of skill, but a lack of conditioning.

"We tested all these guys the week before they went home, so they know exactly what their weaknesses are: they're not in good enough shape to play at the CIS level. They've come from programs where they were able to get by on their athletic ability and



FILE PHOTOS: PETE YEE (LEFT), NEAL WILDING (RIGHT)

**THE OLD GUARD (AND POST)** Alberta have to replace departing players like Scott Gordon, left, and Tyson Jones.

skills, but at this level, the players have skills and they work hard, and we didn't work hard enough," he said.

Suderman could see big minutes backing up Van Loo, but Horwood is cautious due to Suderman's youth.

"On the highest level teams, it's

almost impossible for a kid to come in from high school and get significant minutes," Horwood admitted. "So for most high-school players, it's a trade-off: go to university and sit on the bench for a year or two, or go to college, play right away, and get some

valuable playing time. There are very few Phil Sudol or Mike Melnychuk types that can come out and make an impact at the university level right away, but there are some guys out there who, in a year or two, can be impact players."