

Top-ranked TWU team visits Bears

VICTOR VARGAS
Online Coordinator

Coming off a Thanksgiving break, the Bears soccer team hopes the rest will have done them good as they prepare to face Trinity Western and Fraser Valley this weekend at home. Both TWU (7-1-0) and UCFV (3-5-0) have defeated the Bears (4-2-2) handily already this season, but the Bears have recently been on a roll and want revenge for those losses.

Alberta, last year's national champions, is now ranked second in Canada West behind TWU, an enjoyable position to hold in what was supposed to be a rebuilding year. The team suffered a slow start to the season, and according to head coach Len Vickery, a lot of the problems earlier in the year were due to the high player turnover.

"These things don't happen overnight. You just don't put a group of players together and somehow, magically, things come together quickly, especially when they are younger players, coming from high school to a new level of soccer, and some of their opponents have had a good number of fourth- and fifth-year players," he said. "I think [the improvement] speaks to the quality of the people we have attracted to the program."

In contrast to the Bears' fresh roster, conference leaders TWU have benefited from a large number of returning and experienced players. This has given the Spartans a significant advantage and the Bears another obstacle to conquer.

"They've lost only one game, so they are clearly ahead of everyone else right now," Vickery said. "We've got to be even better than we were



FILEPHOTO: SHAUN MOTT

FLEET-FOOT MAC Alberta's nearly on top, but need a pair of wins this week.

two weekends ago, but that is what we work towards: getting better week by week."

As for Fraser Valley, the newest team to the conference, Vickery noted that they should not be counted out and have been fairly impressive.

"They beat us, which was their first win in Canada West. Even though they had some ties last year, I don't think they had any wins," he said. Fraser Valley went 0-12-2 last year. "They are a team we have to be wary of."

One issue plaguing the team in the first half of the season has seemingly

been defence. Every game has resulted in at least one goal going in against the Bears.

"It's a truism of soccer that we defend as a team. So it's not just the goalkeeper, not just the defence. You need the midfielder to play a bit of a defensive position—even the forwards have to help out in that regard," he said. "So it's a collective effort defensively. We've conceded goals each and every game, albeit a lot less in recent games."

The Bears take on TWU on Saturday, and UCFV on Sunday at Foote Field. Both games begin at 2:15pm.

Hockey Bears look for redemption from U of C

JUSTIN BOLIVAR
Sports Writer

They were hoping to start the season off with a bang, but the Bears hockey team (0-1-1) dropped their season-opening series against the UBC Thunderbirds last weekend with a pair of losses: one in overtime, and the other a 6-2 blow out in regulation. Those surprises behind them, the team has a lot to prepare for before they face Calgary (1-1-0) this weekend.

The Bears knew going into last weekend's series that they would be in for a tight match-up, but the results were still disappointing for a team that has consistently dominated their conference, and the T-Birds.

"Players need to understand their roles and that the team takes priority over the individual."

ERIC THURSTON
BEARS HOCKEY HEAD COACH

The weekend's upset aside, the Bears head coach Eric Thurston still believes his team has what it takes for a winning season, starting with this weekend against the Dinos.

"This year, we expect ourselves to have the identity of a defensive-minded team," he said. "We have to outwork our opposition, make teams play up

to our speed level, and take no selfish penalties. Players need to understand their roles and that the team takes priority over the individual."

One thing the Bears are happy to have this season is strong goaltending. Last year's goalies Aaron Sorochan and Blake Grenier will be sharing time in net.

"There won't really be any changes in goal from last season. Both goalies will get a chance to start, and the key will be to maintain a low goals-against-average and to move the puck well out of our zone."

There weren't any real surprises in the pre-season, and despite the losses against UBC, Thurston is happy with the performances from his key players so far this season—his rookies in particular. Athletes he expects big things of include Jason Fransoo, a first-year defenceman who was a stand-out when the Bears took on the Oiler rookies in September.

Another potential new star is left wing Eric Hunter, who was drafted and then released by the New York Rangers. In addition, Thurston feels that rookie forward Derek Ryan, who scored on UBC on Friday, will be solid on both offence and defence. Rounding out the rookie crop is left wing Kyle Pess, who Thurston expects to bring intensity to the team, as well as solidifying the penalty kill.

The Bears take on the Dinos both at home and away this weekend. On Friday night, they'll play in Calgary at 8pm, and the puck drops at Clare Drake on Saturday night at 7:30pm.

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