

Bears ready for physical rematch with UBC

The last time they met, the Bears hockey team underestimated the Thunderbirds and were swept—but this time, Alberta's ready

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When the Golden Bears hockey squad was swept by the UBC Thunderbirds in early October, they were missing one key ingredient: respect. As Alberta (9-2-1) prepares to host the T-birds (7-5-0) this weekend, the team hopes to change that.

"The guys have shown that they want to show UBC that we're going to be a team that you're going to have to battle against; we're not just going to go out and go through the motions," Bears head coach Eric Thurston said.

"Respect is a big thing, and I don't think we respected them as much as we should have. I think it was really good for us in the sense that we understood that we have to show up every night and work hard to be successful. It was a good wake-up call and a good lesson."

Thurston noted that his team's effort was lacking earlier in the season in Vancouver, and UBC was able to take advantage of that. Accordingly, the Bears can ill afford to take the Thunderbirds too lightly, as their opponents bring with them an aggressive style of play, counter to Alberta's preference.

"It's going to be a very physical weekend; they play a very tough brand of hockey. They come out very physical; we're not a physical team," Thurston admitted. "We're a speed-built team; we have good puck-possession skills, but our guys can be physical. We just have to make sure that we come out and we're not curling away from our checks—you don't have to put a guy in the fifth row, but we need to make sure we finish our checks."



FILE PHOTO: TARA STIEGLITZ

CENTRE OF ATTENTION The Bears will have their work cut out for them when they face UBC this weekend, a team that's beaten them twice already this season.

Alberta will rely on their speed and puck-handling ability to counter UBC's physicality. Controlling the puck deep in the Thunderbird zone will be Alberta's goal.

"We have to make sure our forwards are skating, and when we attack their blueline, we can't [be, as] I call it, 'getting into the tracks,' where forwards stop skating and just start to

coast," Thurston explained. "We have to make sure we drive their defence with speed and make sure we work the puck low on them, but don't make blind passes or passes you're sort of forcing to guys in the slot."

Alberta is coming off a pair of wins over the conference-leading Saskatchewan Huskies two weeks ago, and had a bye week this past weekend.

The time off gave the Bears a chance to rest and get healthy—most notably first-year defenceman Jason Fransoo, who Thurston expects to have back in the lineup Friday after Fransoo missed the past four games.

"It came at a good time—coming off two emotional wins against Saskatchewan—and gave us a chance to recharge our batteries for a little

bit," Thurston said.

With only four games left before the Christmas break, Thurston noted that his team is in a critical stretch of their schedule that will serve to set them up for a strong second half.

"I looked at these last six games—Saskatchewan, UBC, and Calgary—as a measuring stick and a real good test for our team to see where we are."

Green Huskies volleyball team set to face experienced Golden Bears

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When the Saskatchewan Huskies walk into the Main Gym this weekend for their games against the Bears volleyball team, they'll know they have their work cut out for them. The Huskies (1-7) are at the bottom of the Canada West standings, while Alberta (5-1) is ranked number one in CIS and is coming back rested from a bye weekend.

"I'm expecting them to be very good—the way the number-one ranked team in the country should be," Saskatchewan head coach Brian Galvas said.

Unlike the Bears, who have six fourth- or fifth-year players and only two rookies, Saskatchewan's roster is packed with new players. There are eight brand-new Huskies on the 14-man roster, and only one athlete—fourth-year right side Brian Yuzdepski—with more than three seasons' experience. Galvas considers this to be his team's greatest problem on the court—especially given that Canada West is generally considered the toughest conference in the country.

"We're inexperienced right now,

and an inability to execute at this level is the biggest weakness," Galvas said. "We do have some size with our youth, so with patience and development, hopefully they're going to be able to get to the level that's required

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TERRY DANYLUK
BEARS HEAD COACH

to compete at the Canada West level.

"We're young and inexperienced, and we hope to improve throughout the year to try to put ourselves in a position to try to compete for a playoff position."

The Bears will be doing their best to get in the Huskies' way this weekend at home. The team is coming off a bye week after suffering their first loss of the season against Winnipeg in a rematch of last year's national final, which the Bears also lost. Alberta head coach Terry Danyluk said that they

spent the break resting and tightening up their game.

"We've been doing some new things in practice to try to stabilize some of our defences, and we've introduced a few different things offensively," he said. "We're going to see how they work this weekend, so I'm excited about that."

"We needed to have a chance to change some things and to try to improve in some areas. We've had two weeks to do that, so this weekend we'll see whether or not those things happen. I'm hoping to see some of the things we've been working on transfer into game play."

Though the temptation might have been there to take the weekend's results for granted, the Bears will be taking the Huskies seriously.

"We have an opponent that's young, but they're a well-coached team, so we can't ever take them for granted," Danyluk said. "It has nothing to do with who we're playing."

Danyluk attributes the depth of the Alberta bench with their strong season so far.

"Almost everybody on our team has played now at least at some point, so I think that our depth is pretty good," he said.

Games are at 8pm on Friday and



FILE PHOTO: LAUREN STIEGLITZ

WAIT FOR IT ... WAIT FOR IT Joel Schmuland (hitting) and his fellow Bears are expected to dominate the Huskies, but they aren't making any assumptions.