

Only pride on the line for Bears against T-Birds

PAUL OWEN
Managing Editor

With a first-round playoff bye and home-ice advantage sewn up, the Golden Bears hockey team (20-4-2) finds itself in an unusual position as they try to play spoiler against the UBC Thunderbirds (11-15-0) this weekend.

With both teams playing their final two games of the season, UBC sits only a single point ahead of Regina (9-14-3) for fifth place in Canada West. Both the T-Birds and the Cougars have clinched their playoff spots, but the team that finishes ahead in the standings will travel to Winnipeg to play Manitoba (12-12-2), while the sixth-place finisher gets a date with the red-hot Calgary Dinos (15-7-4), who have lost only twice in their past 15 games.

"It'll be a tough weekend because [UBC's] still battling with Regina to see who finishes fifth or sixth," Bears head coach Eric Thurston said. "To be honest with you, with the way Calgary is playing, it's going to be tough going through there. Whoever plays Manitoba, it's going to be tough, but if you were to weigh things, that would be a match-up where anything can happen."

The first time the Thunderbirds and Golden Bears faced off, UBC brought out the brooms at home and sent Alberta packing with a pair of losses to open the season. And while the Bears exacted their revenge in November, turning the tables on the T-Birds with a sweep of their own, Thurston noted that UBC could still cause the Bears some problems.

"Their goaltending when they've been here [has been] very solid—Thuot was very, very good—and we



FILEPHOTO: MIKE OTTO

MAD DASH FOR THE FINISH LINE Coming off a disappointing loss, the Bears want to finish the regular season off with a win against the Thunderbirds at home.

struggled with [Darrell] May, [Marc] Desloges, and [Curtis] Billsten's line, and we have to do a good job shutting down them because that's obviously a huge part of their offence," he said. "If we're standing still and we're overhandling the puck, they'll be able to check us [and] have turnovers."

"We have to use our speed, drive their defence, work them down low, and, when we're playing five-on-five, get pucks through from the points and win those battles."

With their playoff spot locked up,

Alberta may have little to play for this weekend, but after a bye-week-turned-make-up-game last week saw the Bears drop a 2-1 decision to Calgary, Thurston is expecting his team to build some momentum.

"I think we have to start getting ready for playoffs. We didn't have a very good week in practice last week. I thought, mentally, we took it off, and we have to start getting ready to be mentally ready for playoffs," he explained.

A large part of that preparation will be the team's continued adjust-

ment to the absence of captain Harlan Anderson—the top-scoring defenceman in the conference—who continues to suffer from a knee injury sustained three weeks ago at home against Regina.

Filling Anderson's spot on the bench is third-year Grant MacEwan transfer Aaron Agnew. The 6'3", 225lb rearguard from Prince George has impressed Thurston with his physical presence in his two games thus far.

"Aaron Agnew has done a tremendous job," Thurston said.

"Aaron, in Saskatchewan, came in, played solid, played physical, moved the puck well—just did all the little things that he needed to do. He really played well, I thought also, against Calgary, and he had a great hit—a clean, solid, hard hit—on Jared Aulin, and it rocked Aulin pretty good."

The Bears face off against the T-Birds Friday and Saturday at 7:30pm. Saturday's game will be seniors' night for fifth-years Anderson, Tim Krymusa, Ryan Stempfle, and Richard Hamula.

Imagine the possibilities

Professional Teaching Degree
amidst a looming teacher shortage

International Travel Experiences
experience teaching, music and culture abroad

Small Class Sizes
average senior class size is 28 students

Diverse Degrees
over 40 areas of specialty

Combined Degrees
receive two full degrees in only five years

Two-Year After Degrees
with an existing degree, complete an Ed degree in two years

www.education.ualberta.ca
or call 780-492-3659



FACULTY OF
EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

APPLICATION DEADLINE MARCH 31