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Steele driving force for Golden Bears

Graduating guard 'basically carried us' for past two seasons—Horwood

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"If not our hardest worker, then he was certainly one of our hardest workers all the time, and he cared so much. There was never any doubt in our minds about how Andrew cared about the team and how we were doing."

In fact, sometimes that enthusiasm went too far. Parker spent most of his first two years with the Bears in perpetual foul trouble, and often had trouble containing his emotions.

"There were times when his overexuberance hurt the team, but that was a fault of trying too hard, not trying too little," Horwood said. "And of course there were times when there were breakdowns mentally on the court with Andrew because he was used to playing a different style, and his old habits went back, so there were times when I'd have to get mad at him and try to get him readjusted."

But Parker turned into an efficient scorer—averaging 10.3 points per game this season—and tenacious defender this season, drawing praise from his coach.

"He settled down great this year, I thought he had a great year. He went to the boards much better, he did the things we needed him to do." Horwood explained. "He wasn't as consistent as I would have liked him to have been, but he was way more consistent than he'd been in his previous two years. But the one thing you can say about Andrew is that you never, ever disputed his heart and his drive and his committement to the team."

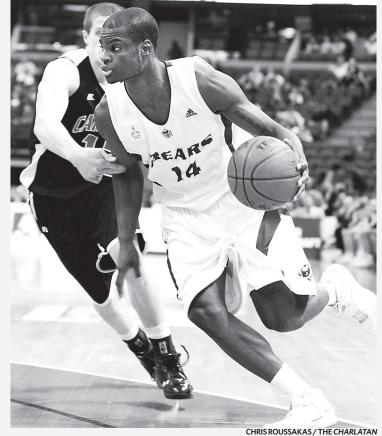
Alex Steele, in contrast to his departing teammates, isn't particularly ostentatious or loud on or off the court—but get a ball in his hands, and more often than not he'll score. Almost since he transferred to the Bears from Grant MacEwan for the 2005/06 season, he has been one of Alberta's most important scorers.

"Alex is just a guy that every guard

never stops working hard" Parker said. "And he's fearless—he's not afraid of anything. That's why I really respect him, and that's why we really got along. Because we're both kind of like the same person—different sides of the city, black guy, white guy—but we're just fearless.'

Steele was just as key to Alberta this year. Named Canada West Player of the Year and a CIS first-team all-Canadian, his play-including a 40-point performance in Januarywas the single most important factor in getting the team to nationals this season.

"Alex carried us. He basically carried us last year, and he carried us this year," Horwood said. "We don't get here without Alex; we're not even in a position to compete at this level without Alex. Many many times throughout this year when we're struggling to get scoring from anybody, we had to get scoring from somewhere, and



INTERNAL DRIVE Andrew Parker's perserverance made him a key cog.



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