



THE BRUNSWICKIAN

FALL ON YOUR KNEES Aaron Sorochan handles the puck during Alberta's overtime loss to les Aigles Bleus last Thursday. Sorochan made 28 saves that game, 22 against McGill the next day, and 40 in the final against UNB on Sunday night.

Sorochan's spectacular saves rescue Alberta in post-season

PAUL OWEN
Managing Editor

MONCTON—On Saturday night, Aaron Sorochan watched McGill Redmen goaltender Mathieu Poitras make 39 saves to rob Moncton of a spot in the CIS men's hockey final. Not to be outdone, the Alberta netminder one-upped Poitras in the gold-medal match on Sunday, making 40 saves in a 3-2 Alberta win.

Often overshadowed by the offensive flair of the Golden Bears have shown throughout the playoffs, Sorochan has been a stalwart between the pipes for the 2008 national champions, right from their first series against the Manitoba Bisons.

"He's got such a great attitude that if it's not a great goal [by] his standard, he's going to put the wall up, and I thought that really was prevalent when we played Manitoba," Alberta head coach Eric Thurston explained. "We got down 3-0 and then he said, 'You ain't getting anymore; I'll put it on my guys now to get rolling,' and we did because he just kept coming with save after save."

In that game—the second in the best-of-three series—Sorochan let in three in the first 14:36 but settled down to make 29 saves en route to a 4-3 Alberta victory in double overtime and a series

sweep of the Bisons.

The third-year goalie showed the same perseverance against both l'Université de Moncton and the University of New Brunswick in the tournament. In both games, Alberta fell behind early before Sorochan shut the door, turning aside nearly every shot he faced—many of them in spectacular fashion.

"He's been unbelievable; you can't say enough about his character and how hard he played for us," second-year forward Ian McDonald said. "UNB, at points, were taking it to us a little bit, and every time they did, he was there to make a big save and keep us in the game."

"He gave us every opportunity to win. He made the saves at the times we needed: saves that were out of this world, saves that other goalies would give up on," second-year forward Lee Zalasky agreed.

Though 2007/08 could be considered a bit of a down season for Sorochan, who saw his save percentage drop to .898 from .914 last year, he picked up his play during the playoffs, going 6-1 with a 2.00 goals-against average and .928 save percentage in his seven playoff appearances.

"Aaron is a big-time player. Those are guys you want on your team: they

want the puck; they want to be in net; they want that challenge. Aaron has been absolutely tremendous," Thurston said.

"In my first year, I got a taste of winning a national championship, and you get hungry to win more," Sorochan added, noting that that desire leads to his improved play in the postseason.

But while Sorochan has collected numerous individual accolades in his first three years at the U of A—he was CIS Rookie of the Year in 2005/06, a first-team all-Canadian in 2006/07, and a conference all-star all three seasons with Alberta—and backstopped the Golden Bears to two titles in that time, he credits the players in front of him for giving him the opportunity to maintain order in the crease.

"I'm as good as this team makes me," he said after Sunday night's victory over UNB.

"Tonight, there was a couple of rebounds I gave up I shouldn't have, but our D-men were right there to clear it; I never faced anything out of the ordinary for screens. Guys are moving players out of the way: I saw every shot—all 42 of them I saw—and that's a huge reason why I was able to make those saves tonight and why I was able to make them all season long."

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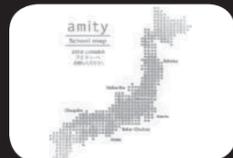
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