

Veteran Bears hungry for championship in final season

HOCKEY PREVIEW

Bears vs. Cougars

Friday, Feb. 1 at 6 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 2 at 7 p.m.
Clare Drake Arena, Edmonton, AB

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As any veteran player nears the end of their CIS career, it's only natural for these athletes to start getting anxious about winning a CIS championship before they graduate and move on in their careers.

On a relatively young Golden Bears hockey team, there are just two players in their fifth year of eligibility — they've come close to winning a national championship in the past, only to come just short of that goal. The last time the Bears won a CIS national championship was the 2007-2008 season, the year prior to team captain Greg Gardner and goaltender Real Cyr joining the team. Since then, the Bears have made nationals in three out of four seasons, even making it to the championship game once before losing in overtime.

"Coming in the year after they win nationals is pretty exciting. You think that they're going to do it every year,"

Gardner recalled. "Realizing it's my last year is exciting, but there's also a little more pressure knowing you don't get to say, 'There's always next year.'"

"That's one of the reasons I picked this program is knowing I would have the opportunity to win nationals every year — especially coming off of the year that they had before I came here — and realizing that firsthand from them. When you get to (CIS nationals), it's tough. You've got to play on your feet and can't make any mistakes or it's going to cost you, and if you lose a game, you're out of the tournament. I'm just hoping for another opportunity to get that national title."

The Bears have put themselves in a prime position to be national championship contenders this season. After a shaky start to the year, they've won 19 of their last 21 games, putting them in first place in the conference with just two weekends left before playoffs. Cyr attributed the team's successful run this year to the disappointing results of their last season that saw the team exit the quarterfinals after being eliminated by their rivals from the University of Saskatchewan.

"I think a lot of it has to do with the sting of last year and how unsuccessful we were," Cyr said. "It was a good

wake-up call — the young guys are great. This team really gelled together well from the start. We get along on and off the ice, we're always together and it's a good group of guys that would do anything for each other."

The team's development of their young players was inevitably helped along by their veterans. Cyr, on the one hand, has split time this season with younger goalie Kurtis Mucha, while Gardner, entering his second year as Bears' captain, has played an important role in leading a relatively young team that saw a lot of turnover in his first season in the role.

"You look at the captains of the past, and being able to put your name alongside those guys is pretty exciting," Gardner said. "But along with that comes a lot of responsibility. Last year, we had a really young team bringing in 10 or 11 new guys, so there was a little added responsibility for myself helping guys adjust to how it is at the CIS level."

Heading into their second-last weekend of the season, both players have learned during their time with the Golden Bears that they can't take any opponents lightly, nor can they look past other teams towards playoffs.

"When you come here and you see all the banners and you hear about the tradition and how (The Bears are)



HARRY DU

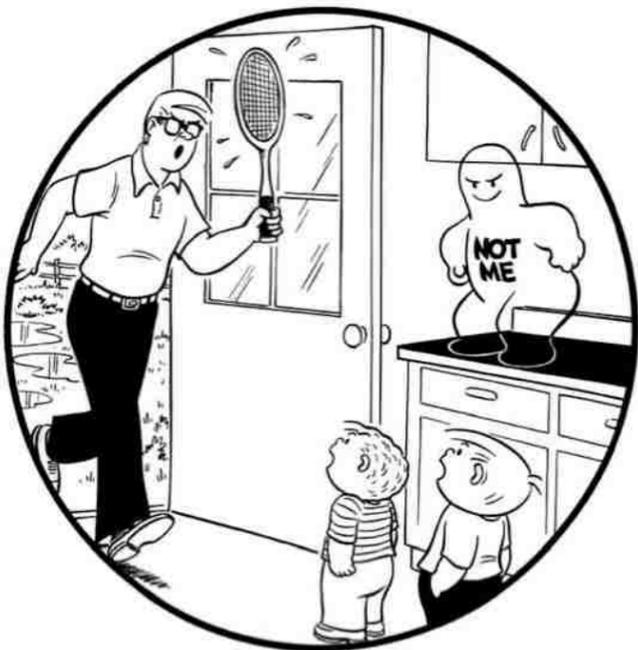
a winning team, you sometimes just think putting the jersey on automatically makes you a winner," Cyr recalled from his first year.

"I thought about (this final season) more over the summer. It didn't stress me out, but it made me a little more anxious to get started. Once the season starts, you realize it's just

another season and no different from any other season you've played in your life," he continued.

"It's a cliché, but one day at a time is a huge thing. If (Gardner) and I think this is going to be our last year and we're thinking this is our last shot, thinking about March right now — it's not going to benefit anybody."

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? info week

FEBRUARY 11-14, 2013
6:00 & 7:15 PM NIGHTLY

Info Week is a series of free, program-specific information sessions that zero in on more than 75 program choices. The career focus changes each evening, so plan to come on the night that interests you most. Sessions start at 6:00 pm and repeat at 7:15 pm nightly on Main Campus. Parking is free.

Visit the website for details of programs and session locations.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11

- Business & Administration (10 programs)
- Hospitality & Culinary Arts (4 programs)
- Media & Design (6 programs)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

- Engineering Technologies (13 programs)
- IT & Electronics (7 programs)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

- Building Construction & Design (4 programs)
- Environmental Management (9 programs)
- Skilled Trades (7 programs)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

- Animal Studies (2 programs)
- Health Sciences (17 programs)

EXTRA INFO EVERY NIGHT

- Take a campus tour! Tours leave from the Bookstore entrance at 5:15, 6:00 and 7:15 pm nightly.
- Academic Success Centre, Student Recruitment, Financial Aid, Academic Upgrading, English as a Second Language, JR Shaw School of Business and Continuing Education staff ready to help with all inquiries.
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