

Bears solid in pair of Brick wins

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BODY BLOW Bears forward Chad Klassen (right) was part of a Bears offensive attack that put up five goals both nights.

The 25th annual Golden Bears Brick Invitational was held at Clare Drake Arena over the weekend. Making its return after a two-year hiatus, the tournament gave the Bears hockey team their first look of the season at some Canada West opponents.

A 5–1 Bears victory over the Regina Cougars on Friday night was followed up on Saturday with a hard-fought 5–2 win over conference rivals, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies. Although these preseason games don't carry any major

implications, the Bears proved that they'll once again be a force to be reckoned with when they open up conference play in early October.

“Our guys take a lot of pride in going out and playing against the [Cougars] and the Huskies,” Bears Head Coach Eric Thurston commented.

Against the Cougars, fourth-year forward Chad Klassen opened up the scoring at 5:47 of the first period when he deposited a loose puck at the side of the net past goaltender Brant Hilton. The Bears took hold of the early momentum against Regina en route to a 3–0 lead after the opening period and never relinquished it.

Alberta also got goals from Sean Ringrose, Ian McDonald, Colin Joe, and Reade Wolansky. McDonald had three points on the night and was named the game's MVP. Bears goaltender Real Cyr was sharp when called upon, finishing the game with 27 saves. Matthew Rintoul, meanwhile, had the lone goal for the Cougars.

As much as the Bears came out with tons of energy against Regina, they looked a little sluggish in the opening 20 minutes against the Huskies.

“Both teams looked like they were trying to find their legs early on and get a feel for the game,” Thurston pointed out.

The cycle game, which wasn't featured often by the Cougars, was used effectively by the Huskies to get the Bears into some trouble in the defensive zone, resulting in some early Alberta penalties.

“We had a tough time handling the speed and skill of the Huskies,” Thurston remarked. “They brought in three guys and did their pass-and-gos and pass-and-gos and that caused us some trouble. We need to finish our checks.”

Early in the second period, it was clear that the Alberta had found their legs. There was an increased energy level inside the arena and the home side started

to play the body. The result was a trio of goals by the Bears and a commanding 4–1 edge after two periods.

The Huskies responded by peppering goaltender Travis Yonkman with a bonanza of shots, but his play was terrific in recording 36 saves.

“Our goalie outplayed their goalie,” Thurston noted. “Yonkman is the big reason why we came out with the win.”

Special teams were also a strong contributing factor in the Bears’ win over the Huskies; they were two for six on the power play and a perfect six for six on the penalty kill.

If the Bears can continually have offensive outbursts and stellar goaltending during Canada West play, a chance at another Conference Championship should be in the cards.