

Football Bears one win away from postseason

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[Nathan Liewicki](#), Sports Staff



[PETE YEE](#)

REACHAROUND The Bears can assure themselves of a playoff berth with a win this weekend.

On Saturday afternoon, the Golden Bears football team will take to the friendly turf of Foote Field for their final home game of the season against their provincial rivals, the Calgary Dinos.

The Bears head into the provincial bout a week after their worst loss of the season — a 39–3 beat-down at the hands of the Saskatchewan Huskies at Griffiths Stadium in Saskatoon. Seven turnovers, including six interceptions

thrown by quarterback Quade Armstrong, led to 26 points for the Huskies and a disenchanting bus ride home.

Despite the lopsided defeat, the Bears can still clinch the final playoff spot in Canada West. If they defeat the second-ranked Dinos, or if the Regina Rams lose at home to the Huskies, Alberta will qualify for the playoffs for the first time since 2005.

In order to have a chance to pull off the big upset, the Bears defence will need to slow down the high-powered Calgary offence. The Dinos rank first in almost every offensive category in the conference and are led by 2008 Canada West MVP, running back Matt Walters.

“Matt Walters is the type of back that will go zero, zero, and bust a run of 75 yards on you. We have to make sure we play sound defense, so we can prevent those big runs from occurring,” head coach Jerry Friesen said.

Dinos wide receiver Anthony Parker is another player the Bears defence will have to keep a close eye on. He ranks second in the nation in receiving yards and tallied 178 yards and a touchdown in the Dinos 34–31 victory over the Bears on September 12 in Calgary.

“There’s a lot of water that has gone under the bridge since [week two]. For us there has been a huge learning curve from that point because we were 0–2 after that game,” Friesen commented.

Offensively, the Bears will need to establish their running game with Tendayi Jozzy and Matthew Jarvis, in order to set up the play-action pass — something that the Dinos have had difficulty stopping. The Dinos rank last in Canada West in pass defence, so the Bears will look to exploit that weakness.

“There has to be a balance between the running and the passing game. Even though Calgary has given up more yards through the air, we still need to run the ball effectively,” Friesen said.

On paper, the Dinos are a better team than the Golden Bears, but Friesen's squad will be fighting for their playoff lives in Saturday's gridiron battle and that should result in a heightened level of intensity. That's sure to come with the battle of Alberta.

"It makes no difference what the sport is, whenever Edmonton and Calgary collide, it is an intense battle," Friesen noted. "There's a lot more at stake than just the points on the board — there's a pride of programs at stake too."

The Bears and Dinos will kick off their Canada West regular season finale at 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, with the game available online at www.bears.ualberta.ca.