Foot Bears hoping to start strong

Soccer team will rely on veterans in their season opener against Saskatchewan

JUSTIN BELL
Managing Editor

The Golden Bears soccer team has some huge expectations to live up to this year. After making it to the CIS West Final last year with a group of five-year players, they're going to be setting their sights even higher.

Bears head man Len Vickery said he's hoping to make it to the national championship this year. A number of players have decided to make a return to the roster, providing valuable experience that could make all the difference.

"Our third years are now fourth years. Our first years are all second second-year veterans, and we have a number of five-year players this year," Vickery explained.

The Bears will be looking to veteran players like Dallas Back, Mike Gill, Milan Tomaszewicz, and Brent Delvin to make an impact for the Bears this year. Colin, who was part of the CIS second team All-Canadian last year's season, will be looked upon to provide veteran leadership.

But that's not to say rookies won't have a spot on this year's team. There are six players making their debut with the men's soccer team, including Anthony Pavlovic, C.J. Gilchrist, Mark Wright, Roderick Okeke, and Marcus Johnstone. Four of them came from the Golden Bears' Greens and Gold development team, and Johnstone spent time with both the men's national U-17 team and the National Scottish Soccer club, and was recommended to the Vancouver White Caps residency program where he spent two years.

Vickery had the opportunity to watch a number of the players in action two weeks ago at Foote Field in pre-season games against the Concordia University of Alberta Thunderbirds and the Grant MacEwan Griffins, both Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference teams.

The Golden Bears took both games, downing the Thunderbirds 3-2 and the Griffins 4-0. While they were games against teams they won't face in the regular season, Vickery said he used the chance to check out players and decide what his team needs to improve upon.

"It's a good evaluation, the press season tournament. It allows the opportunity to see those players in a good competitive environment. The results are secondary."

The Golden Bears have been playing against the local college teams for the past few seasons, allowing both sides pressure matches to check their lineup and make last minute changes.

But now 'tis the real thing for the Golden Bears. They will be heading to Saskatchewan this weekend to play an opening weekend double-header against the University of Saskatchewan, a team that finished at the bottom of the CIS West last year. And while they should be confident of sweeping win with two teams in Saskatchewan based on last year's record, Vickery said he had to keep an eye out to any teams in the CIS West tightly.

With a schedule that is only 14 games long and concludes by the beginning of November, the Bears will have to take every game seriously and not underestimate the power of the emerging teams — particularly in a league where only the top 60 percent of teams make the playoffs.

"We can't discount Calgary, Lethbridge, or Saskatchewan," said Vickery.

Thunderbirds fall against Gridiron Bears

DIANA FRANKEN
The Ubyssey (University of British Columbia)

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Last Saturday, the Thunderbirds Football team traveled the Alberta border to lock off the beginning of their CIS seasons. The team managed to come out ahead in its two games, 12-28, last week's first win of the season.

"We need to improve in a couple of areas. We left some plays on the field. We left things too late in the game. I look to the first and third quarter, we weren't really doing what we should have been offensively and taking advantage of what they weren't doing defensively," said UBC head coach Shawn O'leş.

O'leş was referring to the fact that Alberta managed to scramble eight points on the scoreboard before UBC quarterback Billy Greene could even connect with a receiver.

While Greene routinely had to rely on his feet, rather than his arm, to move the chains up the field, Bears quarterback Julian Marchand faced considerably better with his air attack, racking up 233 passing yards and four touchdowns, earning the Canada West Player of the Week award.

As the game continued the 'Birds' offense proved to fans that they're made out of different feathers this year. Greene got the passing game in sync and started driving the ball with more consistency.

"He's exactly what you saw out there. He can make plays with his feet, with his arm. He's smart. He works hard. He's exactly what we needed looking for in a quarterback. He's young, tough, and young guys are going to make mistakes sometimes," O'leş said.

The defense was a somewhat similar story. Having a poor third quarter. In the third quarter, the blue and gold gave up 31 points to the Bears. The Thunderbirds were unable to put any pressure on the Bears pivot.

"I got to digest it a little bit and I got to watch some film to see exactly where we were missing. We had a couple big plays on defense we would like to have back," O'leş said.

Other Thunderbirds were more optimistic.

"We were very disappointed... Frailly, our defense came as the game — our offense put up 28 points and that should be enough," defensive back Chris Mark said.

But like the offense, the defense had to heighten efforts such as to keep the two teams from scoring more in the second half of the game. But no one on the gridiron felt at a disadvantage, he says," O'leş continued.

The Thunderbirds will travel to the prairies this Friday to face off against the Saskatchewan Huskies, while the Bears will play against the Manitoba Bisons this Sunday before returning to Foote Field for their home opener against their provincial rivals Calgary Dinos — the number-one ranked team in the CIS — on September 18.