



U got Schooled

P-Ow shows you H-ow



Hey there, Captain First-Year. I know you've only been on campus a short while, but perhaps you've noticed the giant, yellow building on the southwestern part of campus. This, and the attached complex are known as the Butterdome and Van Vliet Centre. Hell, if you're in Phys Ed, you're probably sitting inside it right now, reading this little piece. This is the hub of campus sports here at the University of Alberta. Now, you're probably thinking you know all there is to know about sports. After all, you were the star centre on your high school team in Kindersley. Well, guess what? You don't. Lucky for you though, I do.

Written by Paul Owen

THE REAL BASICS

If your Orientation leaders have gotten around to teaching you the "U of A" chant, then you probably have no clue what they mean when they say "Golden Bears" and "Panda Bears." Here at the U, those are the terms that are affectionately used to refer to the men and women, respectively, who participate in varsity sport. Also, if you are a male, you can probably refer to yourself as a Golden Bear when referencing where you go to school. If you're a female, stick to Panda, since they aren't really bears at all (your Orientation Leaders lied to you). I know it might seem a little overwhelming that we have different names for our different genders, but it could be worse: everyone, including the women, could be the Wesmen.

The Golden Bears, despite their moniker, generally don't wear gold. More often they wear green or white with gold trim or piping. This may seem like a bit of a misnomer, but the Bears are so successful that they're often found wearing more gold around their necks. The teams' mascot is GUBA, the Great University Bear of Alberta, whose psychotic grin and all-green attire has been scaring children for decades.

The Pandas women—that's right, our female teams are now the women's teams, not the girls' teams—are represented by a snarling Panda logo that just happens to be missing eyes. Not that it matters because Pandas see using sound. They're like bats that way. Patches is the beloved Pandas mascot, and unlike her male counterpart, is actually enjoyable to have hanging around games.

Alberta currently participates in eleven women's and ten men's sports. Both sexes partake in basketball, volleyball, hockey, soccer, swimming, cross-country, track and field, wrestling and tennis. The women also play field hockey and rugby, while the men get football. This makes it so there's roughly the same number of female athletes as there are male. Isn't equality grand?

Alberta's strongest sport is hockey, where both the men and women are defending national champions. The volleyball teams are also perennial powerhouses, while the rugby team has won five of the seven national titles, and is coming off a silver medal. The field hockey team is also on a high after a Cinderella-run to a national championship last season.

While it may seem as though Alberta is good at everything, recent years have seen struggles from the swimming programs, the Pandas basketball team, the Pandas cross-country team and, last year, the wrestling teams.

For only four bucks, with your student ID, you can catch any game on campus. Volleyball and basketball inhabit the Main Gym, which is currently in need of a hip name change, while hockey takes place right next door in Clare Drake Arena, which is in desperate need of not being an ugly, uncomfortable shit-hole. Football, soccer, rugby and field hockey take place at Foote Field, just south of campus, while tennis has the Saville Sports Centre. Wrestling and Track take place inside the Butterdome.

INTRO TO CIS

With the exception of tennis, all of the sports played at the U of A are considered Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) events. This is because all of them hold a CIS national championship.

CIS is composed of four conferences: Atlantic University Sport (AUS) for the Maritimes, the Québec Student Sports Federation (QSSF), Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and Canada West, which includes all schools west of Ontario. CIS schools must be a member of one of the four conferences, and must declare for at least one male and one female sport. In addition, member universities this year will pay a \$1800 membership fee as well as a sport-specific fee for each that the school partakes in—football is the highest at \$923, while cross-country is the lowest at \$151. Schools also pay a travel-pool fee and a coaches' association fee for each sport.

CIS athletes are given five years of eligibility, as well as the ability to sit out—or red-shirt—a year. They are subject to drug testing and must maintain a 60 per cent average in their courses. Now, lest we shatter the traditional conception that athletes are known for their academic leanings and superior intellect, keep in mind that 60 per cent is a lot harder to attain in university than in high school. They're also required to take a minimum of three courses every semester in which they're competing, for a minimum of six in the year. Student athletes who maintain an average of 80 per cent or higher are recognized as Academic All-Canadians. Alberta had 141 of these last year.

These eligibility requirements often come into effect at the U of A. In the 2004/05 hockey season, Doug Auchenberg failed a drug test and was kicked off the team that would go on to win CIS gold. All-Canadian basketball player Robbie Valpreda was unable to remain academically eligible at the U of A and completed his postsecondary career dominating at Grant MacEwan.

Tennis, as I mentioned earlier, is not a CIS sport, but rather part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), a predominantly American association of smaller schools. Many Canadian schools do participate and thrive in NAIA sports. Simon Fraser has a top diving squad, and UBC boasts one of the best NAIA baseball programs.

GOOD SPORTING TO YOU

So there's your crash course in Pandas and Bears sports. I hope you realize that this means you have to go to some games now—it's the law on campus. And professors give better grades to those of you with school spirit. Also, there are rarely ever cheerleaders at games, but don't be discouraged: there's this thing called the A-Team that runs around in green jumpsuits with giant gold As on the front and gives out free stuff to a lackluster crowd. I bet they didn't have that in Kindersley, now did they?