

Soccer Pandas sweep weekend tournament

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Sports Editor

For the last two seasons, the Pandas soccer team has had one of the conference's top scorers, so it was no surprise that they lit up their opponents in a preseason tournament in Lethbridge this past weekend. Amy Ciezki, who finished second in Canada West goal scoring last season, potted four goals in the four exhibition games and the Pandas outscored their opponents 12-1, winning all four games.

For head coach Liz Jepsen, the outcome validated her team's entrance in a tournament that she worried would wear them down before the start of the new season, as most of the Pandas spent the summer playing on club teams.

"They have had a grueling club season this summer, and most of them have club provincials Labour Day weekend and then our first games the weekend after, so I was torn on whether or not to play in this tournament," Jepsen said. "We went down to Lethbridge with a couple of things to sort out: we wanted to give those people that were coming into the program a chance to see what they could do against other CIS athletes, and we wanted to give our starters and chance to build and see what we needed to work on."

The offensive-minded Pandas played to their forte by pushing the tempo and attacking the net.

"I can see that we're still on the upward curve from where we started last year. It's really nice to see the athletes have retained a lot of what we focused on. We still have three fantastic strikers—all of our front-runners scored," said Jepsen.

The Pandas won in dominating fashion, dispatching Lethbridge and Saskatchewan by 4-0 scores before knocking off Regina 3-1 and Calgary 1-0. While Jepsen was pleased with the victories, she also felt it important



FILEPHOTO: PETE YEE

SHOWING THEM HOW TO SCORE A potent offense and a bunch of fast runners helped the Pandas take on all comers at a pre-season tourney in Lethbridge.

to recognize the quality of teams they played. Last season, only Calgary made the playoffs, and the other three were three of the bottom four teams in the league. Regina scored only two goals all season.

"When you look at us against Saskatchewan and Lethbridge last season, it certainly wasn't 4-0, so we'll take our success as they come, and it certainly isn't reflective of what will happen down the road," she said. "It's a big confidence boost, but we

also have to remember that, just like us, they weren't necessarily playing their best lineups, either."

Alberta spent the first half of each game using their starters, hoping to get them accustomed to playing together again, and used the second halves to give their other players some time on the field. In addition to proving they still had a potent offense, the Pandas also displayed a defence to match, allowing very few shots on net—Jepsen estimated only two not

counting free kicks and corners—and only one goal.

"Christina Kahlina—she took a year hiatus to focus on her studies—has come back to play out her last year. She's out playing on the left and is a fantastic defender. She's only about 5'4", but tough as nails, doesn't miss a tackle and just goes and goes," Jepsen said. "When you add her to the composure of Natalie Swain in the middle, it makes us tough to beat."

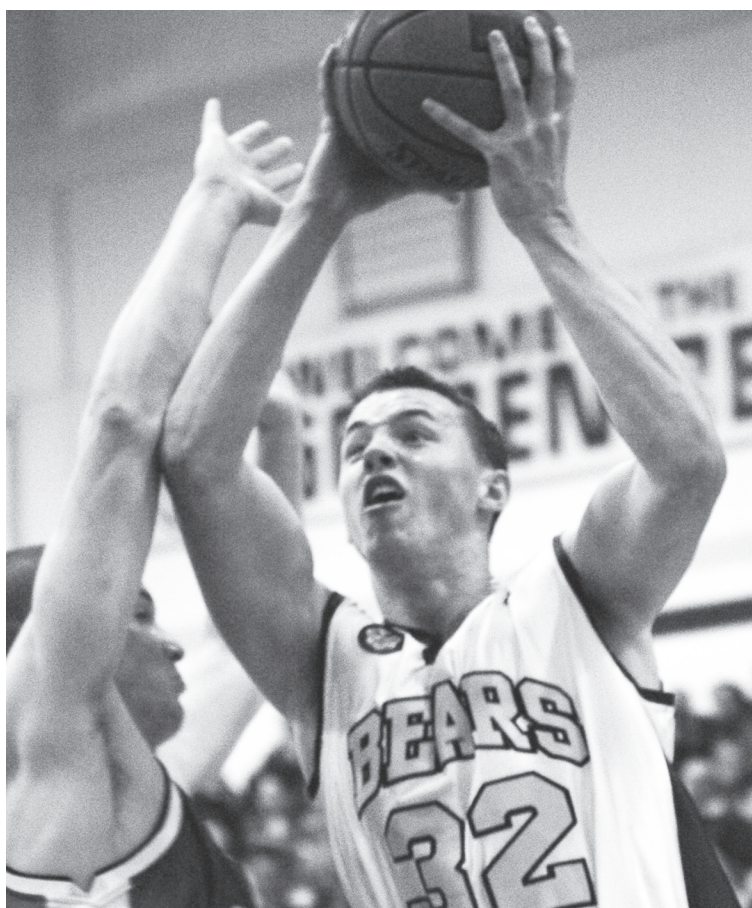
The weekend sweep is a good

starting point for a Pandas team that struggled out of the gate last season, managing only ties in their first three games. Jepsen feels that, this year, her team is prepared for the start of the season 8 September.

"We have seven returning starters, so we still have a really good core, and with all those girls, you can tell that they've spent a year and really grown as players," she said. "I find the team is very composed and settled, and they know what to do."

Golden Bears reload by flexing inter-provincial muscle

Head coach Don Horwood nabbed six BC recruits who will join two other British Columbians playing for the Bears this season



FILEPHOTO: LEANNEFONG

BORN IN THE WESTMOST PROVINCE Gordon is one of eight BC-born Bears.

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Alberta's rat-free status has its pros and cons. On the pro side, rats are disgusting. On the con side, there's the fact that for this year at least, rats of the gym variety were scarce locally. So, when Golden Bears basketball coach Don Horwood went west this past March into British Columbia, he was happy to find a bumper crop of young athletes to fill out his roster.

BC-based hoopsters Scott Leigh, CG Morrison, Eric Casey, Neb Aleksic, Justin Van Loo and Gary Pelton will all dawn the Green and Gold this season for Horwood, who's showing that his left-coast connections are anything but shallow.

Prior to taking the reigns at Alberta in the 1983/84 season, Horwood spent 14 years coaching in Victoria at Oak Bay High School. As he heads into his 24th season as the Bears' head coach, he said that he's in contact with coaches in the area on a regular basis.

"[My contacts] are all guys I've coached against. There are two or three times every year I talk to them about guys we can look at, and from time to time I'll get a call from one of them saying that they've got a guy who'd

work really well in our program, that sort of thing. There are lots of Victoria coaches I know that push their kids in this direction. We've got two Victoria kids coming here now [Morrison and Casey]. The contacts are good. There's a good pipeline there."

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DON HORWOOD

When recruiting in BC, Horwood said he realizes that the U of A can be low on the pecking order for prospects. This year, however, was different.

"Every year the top BC kids go to the States, the next two or three usually go to UBC or UVic," he said. "This year we lucked out in that UBC and UVic are full and loaded. I think they're good enough to play at those

schools, but they really didn't have any openings. Their coaches, when I went out there to talk to them, they said these are guys you should be looking at."

Alongside Horwood's six recruits, veteran players Scott Gordon and Harvey Bradford also hail from BC. They're joined by Winnipeg natives Tyson Jones and last-minute recruit Jamal Bara to make for a heavy out of province majority for the Bears, a first for the program. Horwood said that he's not worried about the program losing local support, as there are still Edmonton-born players on the team, pointing to fluctuations in the local talent pool as a reason for looking outside of the province for talent.

"We always want the local kids," he said. "We went through this period when I first came here in the early '80s. We had ten, maybe more, really good years of good, solid Edmonton high school and college players. The last couple of years haven't been quite as good. It's just a cycle; a couple of thin years here. It looks like down the road, the Alberta [provincial] teams have been good the last couple of years, so it looks like it'll potentially rebuild itself in the next year or two."