



PETE YEE

GETTING THEIR KICKS IN Striker Claire Thomas is going to have to have to score when she gets opportunities like this.

Pandas battle injuries, Huskies

An all-rookie centre midfield was ineffective for the Pandas in their two wins last weekend, but a veteran returning from a rib injury should help them out

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

After squandering numerous scoring chances in a weekend sweep of Calgary and Lethbridge, the Pandas soccer team heads to the University of Saskatchewan this weekend hoping to capitalize on their opportunities.

"We talked about anticipating ahead of time that you're going to get the ball and finish. We're going to work on finishing until it becomes second nature to put the ball in the net," head coach Liz Jepsen said of her team, who scored only one goal on 22 shots against the Pronghorns last Friday. "If by the end of this weekend they aren't [scoring goals], there'll be a different approach. Because our strikers are all so dominant, we just have to get them more prepared to stay focussed and give them the reps and the technique."

"I used to train with their keeper," second-year midfielder Veronique Mayer added of Husky goalie Codi Corrigan. "She's strong, but she's beatable. She has a lot of weaknesses

and we will pound on her. If we bring our momentum into the weekend and just finish our chances, we'll be laughing."

The Pandas were able to dominate the play this weekend despite missing some key veterans—including Mayer—in the midfield, a trend they will need to correct before heading to Saskatoon to face the Huskies.

"We have to make sure our central mids are better," Jepsen said. "We have a lot of injuries in the midfield, and we more or less skipped over our centre mids in our attack. We need to improve our attack in there, and get them involved in the game, because it's going to matter down the stretch."

Aiding the improvement in the midfield will be the return of Mayer, the keeper on last year's team who will be playing her first game outside the crease for Alberta. Mayer has been injured for the last three weeks after dislocating two ribs and suffering from associated muscle and cartilage damage. While she admitted it will take her a while to fully recover from

the injuries, she maintained that she was okay to play and impatient to get back on the pitch.

"I'm anxious and I'm nervous, but it's a good feeling. It's a completely different level from what I'm used to," she said. "I'm excited; I've played against a lot of these girls in club, but I've never played with them."

"If we keep moving and keep changing the [way] that we attack—keeping them on their toes is a big thing, and winning the mid—it's almost impossible to stop us, especially with the three girls we have in the mid."

The Huskies will counter with U-20 national team member Kaylyn Kyle, but Jepsen wasn't too concerned over what the Huskies would throw out on the field.

"More or less, my philosophy is that we need to play our game and let them react. As long as we make our attack a little more diversified and stay clam—by the end of the Calgary game people were a little helter-skelter—we'll be okay," she said.

Staph infection stonewalls Blue Jays

Toronto isn't going to make the playoffs, and it's because of some leg bacteria



PAUL OWEN

Sports
Commentary

\$20 million can buy a lot of things, but what it can't buy is a place in the MLB post-season. It's a lesson the Toronto Blue Jays have learned the hard way this season. After increasing their payroll by about \$20 million this season, the Jays were in the hunt against the mighty Yankees and Red Sox until the end of July, but now, sitting twelve games back of the division lead, the Jays are clearly out of the playoff race. This unfortunate downturn for the only major-league affiliated baseball team left in Canada can be traced back to one freak accident: the injury to budding superstar Álex Ríos.

On 27 June, in the midst of a 6-0 thrashing of the Washington Nationals—the Jays' fifth win in seven games—Ríos fouled a ball off his leg. This happens to someone at least once

a game, yet, for some reason, Ríos' leg decided a heated playoff race would be the perfect time to go ahead and get all bacteria-ed and infected. Ríos missed the next month of the season with a staph infection and the Blue Jays had their clubhouse disinfected (though it didn't work, as pitcher Ty Taubenheim came down with a similar inflection later in the season).

When he went on the disabled list, Ríos was hitting .330 with a .968 on-base plus slugging percentage (OPS) and was among the league leaders in batting average, RBIs and extra-base hits. He was garnering MVP mentions and setting the table for the best offence in baseball. Ríos missed 23 games and, while the Jays managed to go 13-10 during that stretch—largely due to the career years had by his two replacements Frank Catalanatto and Reed Johnson—the team couldn't manage to gain any ground on the division leader: Boston.

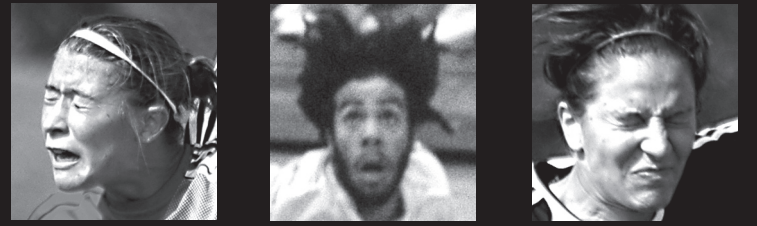
By the time Shea Hillenbrand stirred up the trouble in the Jays locker room and wound up getting traded, the damage was already done. The Jays pitching was uncertain all year, and

they needed to have a fully healthy, fully effective lineup in place. Ríos did come back, but the guy had spent two weeks in hospital and dropped 15-20 pounds. Of course he didn't have the same power and stroke that he had before his hospital stay.

Ríos' OPS has dropped .124 since he came off the disabled list on 28 June, and he has hit just a paltry .211 with only one home run. As Johnson and Catalanatto came back to earth, the Jays were left with only three fear-some hitters in their lineup: Vernon Wells, Troy Glaus and Lyle Overbay. Without Ríos to worry about, teams are now able to pitch around the Jays. The team once had seven regulars batting over .300 and now only has four. Before his injury the Jays had 27 games with more than six runs scored. Since it they've only managed 14.

Some blame Hillenbrand; some blame Josh "worst ERA in history" Towers; some may even blame Ted Lilly, but, for all the Blue Jays' troubles this year, Álex Ríos' freak staph infection wound up affecting the entire team and turning a promising season into a let down.

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