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CHASING THE VIKES Victoria (white) is the class of CIS soccer, but the rest of Canada West isn't far behind them.

West is best in CIS soccer

ROSS PRUSAKOWSKI
 Sports Staff

Though they hardly seemed it when they strode onto Foote Field this weekend, the two dozen players that make up the University of Victoria Vikes weren't women: they were giants.

For the past four years, the Vikes and their compatriots from the left coast, the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds and Trinity Western University Spartans, have combined to capture every Canada West and CIS soccer title available. Considering that UVic is currently undefeated and is the top-ranked team in the nation, it's likely that they'll continue BC's stranglehold on CIS women's soccer. It's a dominance that Tracey David, Victoria's head coach, is at a loss to explain.

"I think we have a good player pool, but so does Alberta—Alberta is a hotbed for players—so there's no difference there, and to be honest with you, Alberta has traditionally been strong too," David said. "But one of the things that I think that we do have on our side [compared to other programs] is that we have a full-year program. We play and train outside all year, so after our CIS season we still continue to train in the wintertime.

And we can do that because we have no snow."

"Their season of play is a little bit different," University of Alberta Pandas head coach Liz Jespen agreed. "They can play outdoor soccer year-round, and I think when you include that they have fantastic coaching staff, you might explain their dominance [over the last few years]."

While the teams from BC have had the most recent success on the national stage, women's soccer is a sport that Canada West has dominated for the last decade. Only three of the last ten CIS gold medals have been handed to schools outside of the conference, with five different schools accounting for the seven top finishes. Unlike the costal team's dominance over the last four years, the disparity between East and West is something that can be chalked up to two differences—the level of coaching and the talent pools—that set the regions apart.

"The West has been very proactive in hiring full-time coaches and I think you see that investment right away. The schools in the East that have good programs are moving towards having full-time coaches," David said. "Also, in the West there aren't as many universities as there are in Ontario. So, in Ontario you have 13

universities that are all competing for the same players, so all of a sudden your pool gets a bit weak."

"The eastern conferences get watered down because there are so many schools so you get your good players going many different places," Jespen added.

However, the gradual addition of teams to Canada West over the last decade has expanded the number of schools trying to attract CIS-calibre players, eroding the talent pool available to each team. While this and the creeping expansion of the conference is something that Jespen doesn't believe to be a critical problem, David disagrees.

"I really really do think that [Canada West] needs to worry about letting in too many programs," said David, whose Vikes are one of six BC teams in Canada West—four of which are located in the Vancouver area. "That's no disrespect to any of the new programs and young programs coming in; it's just a matter of numbers. The more schools you add, the [more] quality players you need and I don't know if we have a large supply of the quality of player that has kept us strong traditionally. Only time will tell, but I think we're kind of at the maximum number of teams."

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THE PEP RALLY

by Paul Owen: Monogamist

Bears Football

The glorious Golden Bears finally got some offensive production this weekend as they put up 39 on Simon Fraser. Unfortunately, the Clan (0-4) struck a deal with Lucifer before the game that allowed them to more-than-double their points total on the season and drop 36 points on the Alberta warriors. William Wallace-esque running back/kick returner Kendall Jeske scored a touchdown with 1:03 left in the game to tie it up at 36 before kicker/viking warrior Scott Stevenson kicked a field goal in overtime to lift Alberta to their third victory of the year. Reports of the team raping and pillaging Vancouver after the game are unfounded.

Bears Fútbol

The Alberta soccer team with penises pulled off a large upset this weekend when they handed top-ranked UBC (4-1-2) their first loss of the season.

The BC boys let their tears flow while the Bears celebrated moving into first place in Canada West. The T-Birds were still crying on Sunday when the Bears (5-0-3) downed Victoria 2-0. John Konye scored a pair in the 3-1 victory over UBC and earned himself Canada West Male Athlete of the Week honours. The Thunderbirds, meanwhile, merely sobbed and vowed revenge.

Pandas Hockey

The almost unbeatable Pandas faced their first CIS opponents of the season in the Marion Hilliard Tournament hosted by the University of Toronto. Lindsay McAlpine scored the lone Alberta goal in a 1-1 tie against the University of Ottawa and netted two more in a 3-2 loss to McGill. Brodie MacDonald scored the two goals in a 2-1 win over Toronto as the Pandas finished 1-1-1. This could be a problem for the Pandas as the season wears on, as the idea behind scoring by committee is to have the goals come from many different sources, and not just one player per game.

Pandas Field Hockey

The defending national champions continued their disappointing season in the

second of three Canada West tournaments going 1-2 against Calgary, UBC and Victoria. Alberta's inability to defeat either the Vikes or the Thunderbirds have left them in a difficult position for defending their banner. A 2-3-1 record does not a national championship make.

Bears Basketball

This year's Bears lost their first game of the year to some former teammates in the annual alumni game. 2002 national champs Phil Scherer and Steven Parker dropped 22 and 21 respectively on the baby Bears en route to victory, proving once again that youth and athleticism is no match for experience and talent.

Fantasy Hockey

The Gateway held its annual NHL draft on Friday afternoon—causing a severe lack of production around the office—and despite having to catch a plane and leaving after the eighth round, my team is still clearly the best in the league. If it weren't for an inexplicable autodraft selection of Martin Gelinat that prompted an opponent to comment, "Martin Gelinat is still alive?" I'd go so far as to say my team is perfect. Also, zero per cent Flames. I wish Alberta was as Flames-free as my team.