



FILE PHOTO: LEANNE FONG

**THE BIG TIME** The Can-Am tournament is a big draw for U of A volleyball.

# National Pride

Eight top university volleyball teams converge on the U of A this weekend to compete in the Husky Energy Can-Am Challenge. Continental bragging rights are on the line as four NCAA teams will take on four from CIS

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Bears volleyball head coach Terry Danyluk remembers how difficult it was to start an international university volleyball tournament eleven years ago. In the early days, American teams scoffed at travelling to Edmonton in the cold fall weather for exhibition volleyball matches. In fact, for the inaugural year, only one American school was willing to come, with a second making the trip the next year. It wasn't until the third year, with the tournament gaining notoriety, that four American schools came to play four Canadian squads: the current format of the Husky Energy Can-Am Challenge today.

"Since then, we've been able to get teams to come on a regular basis, and actually have our choice of teams, for the most part," Danyluk noted.

Today, Edmonton's Can-Am volleyball tournament is touted as one of the best international volleyball competitions in North America. Pepperdine University head coach Marv Dunphy was here the very first year of the Can-Am tournament and credited Danyluk with organizing such a strong volleyball competition, citing his work as the reason Pepperdine continues to return every fall.

"There's a lot of things that you could and couldn't do when you run an event, and we've always tried to make all the little things special," Danyluk said. "We have full officials, score keepers, TV and we do a lot of things that you don't normally see done in pre-season tournaments. For the athletes competing here, all of that extra stuff and the ability to have good competition all at the same time makes it feel almost like a formal championship."

According to Danyluk, the tournament is unique because, unlike other university-level competitions, it pits

the schools against one another in a country versus country setting.

"The Can-Am is one of the top tournaments, as far as I'm concerned, in the country," Trinity Western head coach Ron Pike said. "The calibre of volleyball is very high."

This year's Can-Am tournament pits four of the best men's volleyball squads from CIS against four of the top teams from south of the border that play in the NCAA.

Trinity Western, Alberta, Manitoba and McMaster, ranked first, second, third and fifth respectively last season, will represent Canada. Pepperdine University, Long Beach State, Brigham Young University and Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne (IPFW) will represent the United States. The format is set up so that each Canadian team plays each American team once, for a total of 16 highly competitive matches in three days. Each team victory is counted as one for their country, and the country with the most wins takes home the tournament.

In many sports, the calibre of competition in the NCAA is considerably higher than CIS; however, Canadian teams have dominated the Can-Am volleyball tournament since its inception. Canada has won seven of the ten tournaments against their American counterparts, including a 10-6 game victory last fall. Part of the reason for the Canadian dominance could be that the NCAA season starts later in the year and the Canadian squads have been training for a several weeks now, gearing up for the regular season that starts at the end of October.

Danyluk attributed the dominance to the strong talent pool in Canada. He noted that it's not as deep as the NCAA talent pool, but the top Canadian schools can hold their own on the volleyball court against the top American schools.

"They have top quality teams in

Canada," IPFW head coach Arnie Bell concurred. "There is not a large pool of teams in [the US], and therefore not a large pool of players. Volleyball is much more popular in [Canada] than it is here, for men. Therefore I think the balance is much closer than it would be in basketball or football or anything like that."

"There've been some good Canadian teams which has always helped Canada do well, and I don't think this year is any exception," Pike added. "The Americans are pretty early in their season and haven't had a chance to train—that's a pretty big factor for them."

Despite the fact that this is an exhibition tournament that has no real impact on the season, all the coaches seem to agree that there's national pride at stake. The NCAA is always touted as the stronger athletic organization, so whenever Canadian teams can win some matches against American competition things can get heated on the court.

"I think there is some national pride," Danyluk said. "The tournament is set up country against country, and when a spectator comes to the gym it doesn't matter when they come, it will always be Canada against USA."

"Each year we seem to be reminded as the tournament goes on, and as we head towards those last matches, it becomes much more of a rivalry between countries by the time we're adding up points in our last game," Pike said. "There's probably a little more to it than we might say initially, but it's a good exhibition tournament."

The tournament is scheduled to run Thursday night as well as all day Friday and Saturday. Tonight is Student Appreciation Night and anyone with a ONEcard gets in free of charge to the matchup between the U of A and IPFW at 7pm in the Main Gym.

## THE COMPETITION

### Trinity Western Spartans

Langley, British Columbia  
2005/06 record: 26-7  
2006 CIS Champions  
2005 CIS silver medallists

### Alberta Golden Bears

Edmonton, Alberta  
2005/06 record: 34-2  
2006 CIS silver medallists  
2005 CIS Champions

### Manitoba Bisons

Winnipeg, Manitoba  
2005/06 record: 21-9  
2006 CIS bronze medallists  
2003 CIS Champions

### McMaster Marauders

Hamilton, Ontario  
2005/06 record: 27-17  
2006 CIS sixth-place finish  
2007 CIS nationals host

### IPFW Mastodons

Fort Wayne, Indiana  
2006 record: 23-7  
2006 NCAA semifinalists

### Pepperdine Waves

Malibu, California  
2006 record: 17-8  
2006 NCAA sixth-ranked team  
2005 NCAA Champions

### Long Beach State 49ers

Long Beach, California  
2006 record: 23-10  
2006 NCAA third-ranked team  
1-3 in last year's Can-Am

### Brigham Young Cougars

Provo, Utah  
2006 record: 18-9  
2006 NCAA seventh-ranked team  
2004 NCAA Champions

## SCHEDULE

### Thursday, Main Gym

ALB vs IPFW, 7pm

### Friday, Main Gym

BYU vs MAC, 10am  
LBS vs MAN, 12pm  
TWU vs IPFW, 4pm  
MAN vs BYU, 6:30pm  
ALB vs PEPP, 8pm

### Friday, Pavilion

PEPP vs TWU, 10am  
MAC vs LBS, 6:30pm

### Saturday, Main Gym

PEPP vs MAC, 10am  
LBS vs ALB, 12pm  
MAN vs PEPP, 4pm  
TWU vs LBS, 6:30pm  
ALB vs BYU, 8pm

### Saturday, Pavilion

IPFW vs MAN, 10am  
BYU vs TWU, 12pm  
MAC vs IPFW, 6:30pm