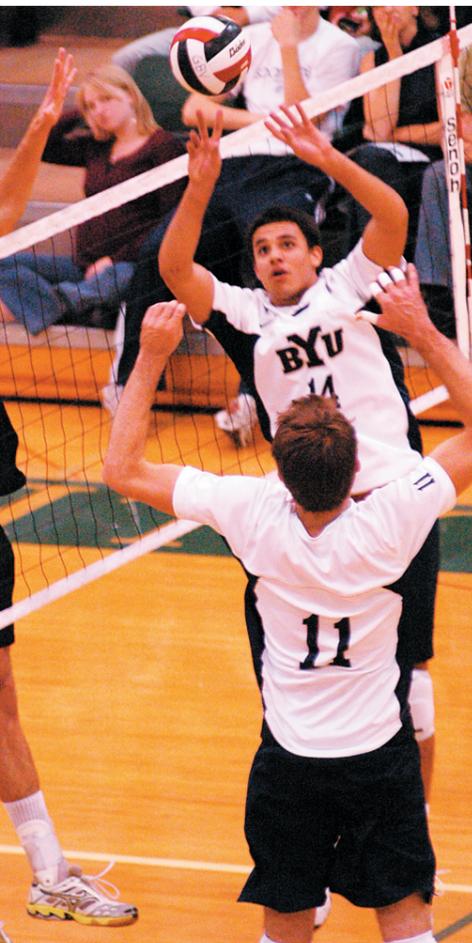


The Can-Am Challenge pits four of the top NCAA teams against four of the top CIS teams in international competition. The squads from each league play each team from the other league once, and the country with the most match wins is dubbed the champions. This year, the Canadian contingent, represented by Alberta (4-0), Trinity Western (2-2), Manitoba (3-1) and McMaster (0-4) downed the Americans—Brigham Young (2-2), Pepperdine (2-2), Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne (2-2) and Long Beach State (1-3)—by a score of 9-7.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

By Paul Owen



For the fourth time in a row, the Golden Bears volleyball team went undefeated in leading CIS to victory over the NCAA in the Husky Energy Can-Am Challenge.

A straight-set victory over the Brigham Young University Cougars on Saturday night clinched the title for the Canadians—their eighth in the eleven-year history of the event—and finished off a near-perfect weekend for the Bears who lost only two sets during the entire tournament. The weekend served to let the volleyball world know that despite losing five starters, Alberta is still one of the top teams in the country.

“Being successful at this time of the year gives us a stepping stone for where we might be able to get to,” Bears head coach Terry Danyluk said. “It sends a message to us for where we’re at and it sends a message to other people in the country that, even with all the changes, we’re not too bad.”

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The win over the Cougars marked the 16th straight victory for Alberta at their own tournament, a streak that has seen them beat eventual NCAA Champs BYU in 2003/04, Pepperdine in 2004/05 and UCLA in 2005/06. Danyluk noted that the placement of the tournament immediately before the start of the regular season helped the Bears enter the season in top form.

“It was a pretty big crowd; for a lot of guys to play their first time in front of a full crowd in our gym was a pretty big motivator,” he said. “I wanted to schedule [the

tournament] as close to league start as possible so we can get a kick-start. This is a very good atmosphere to play your first set of games as a team. The guys look forward to this all year, so I think the excitement adds to it.”

The Cougars took home the nod as top American team of the tournament, after posting a .500 record that saw them defeat Trinity Western but fail to find an answer for the Bears for the fourth-straight year.

“We felt pretty good about beating Trinity Western—it was the first time we’ve beaten Trinity—and I thought this year would be the year we could take down Alberta,” BYU co-interim head coach Shawn Patchell said. “I see guys that are gone—Dallas Soonias isn’t out there—so I think, ‘Wow, this is the year,’ but they play well in front of their crowd and [Danyluk] does a great job. It’s great for us to come here and get beat up a little bit. They take it to us, and it’s a great tournament to get us ready.”

Despite the perfect record, Alberta’s game was hardly error-free: they put an average of 5.07 serves into the net per game. IPFW coach Arnie Bell noted that the serving was poor across the board during the tournament.

“Everybody just tries a little too hard to go for the ace, and sometimes young people don’t use common sense as far as putting the ball in play,” he said.

Despite their serving woes, Danyluk crediting the Bears’ ability to spread the ball on offence as the reason for their success. Alberta setter Brock Pehar was named tournament MVP after averaging 11.3 assists per game over three games.

“When the setter gets named MVP, it’s pretty much a reflection of good team play—that no one attacker stood out, so I was able to have a pretty balanced offence,” Pehar said.

lost a tooth.
not sure if it was my
t of the game—or my

3-1 loss to Manitoba
y root canal Saturday

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