

Puck Pandas face 'Horns in search of scoring depth

Alberta is scoring in bunches, but the points are all coming from the same four players: Barry, Barber, Podloski and McAlpine

TREVOR PHILLIPS
Sports Writer

Heading into the third week of the Pandas hockey season, things appear to already be in top form for head coach Howie Draper's defending National Champions. They've dismantled conference rivals Regina and UBC by a combined score of 24-3, goaltender Holly Tarleton has posted a pair of shutouts in her two starts and third-year forward Jenna Barber notched six points against the Cougars to earn CIS Female Athlete of the Week honours.

However, after the offensive three-headed monster of Barber, Lindsay McAlpine and Tarin Podloski, Alberta lacks considerable scoring depth. In nine exhibition and regular season games, the Pandas have managed an astonishing 41 goals—roughly 4.5 goals per game—easily the highest number in Canada West. Yet, of those 41 goals, 25 have been scored by the trio and six of the remaining 16 belong to fifth-year forward Taryn Barry. With four players accounting for 75 per cent of the offence, the Pandas versatility has to come into question, but Draper isn't worried.

"I don't think there is a concern [for scoring depth]," he said. "I think that we have been fortunate enough to put our top offensive weapons on the top line and dared the other team to try and stop us; so far we've been pretty successful."

But, if the Pandas were capable of getting production from their other lines that support would be very beneficial in close games—in one-goal games this season, the mighty Pandas



TEN BUCKS SAYS SHE SCORED Tarin Podloski(81) is leading Canada West in scoring and is much better than me.

FILE PHOTO: NEAL WILDING

are a mediocre 1-1-1.

"Depth certainly helps you get through those tough situations," Draper admitted, adding that depth has been a strength of past Alberta teams. "It's important to have all four lines contributing because you always want to have more depth than the other team, so you can role over your lines and wear down the opponent. Traditionally we have been effective at doing that and I think this year we have more depth to accomplish that."

One of the untapped resources that awaits in the Pandas' wings has to be the four rookie forwards on the roster.

Wingers Patricia Tulloch, Lindsie Fairfield and Taryn Cornelissen, and centre Leah Copeland have managed just a single goal between them, which came from Copeland in the 5-0 rout of Regina. If the Pandas are to find additional scoring, it should come from the youngsters.

"Both Tulloch and Copeland have amazing potential, and we will be looking for them to grow and learn with the special teams opportunities we are looking to give them," Draper said. "I am quite confident they will start bulging the twine in the near future."

With the winless Lethbridge

Pronghorns skating their way into Clare Drake Arena for a two-game set this weekend, finding outlets for offensive production may not be an immediate concern, but it remains something Draper and the Pandas will have to address in the post-season.

"With those three closer games, it was very early in the season. Come playoff time we're going to know our strengths as a team better," Copeland explained. "The scoring will come from all over, we just have to be patient and wait for it."

The puck drops at 7pm on both Friday and Saturday night.

THE FAB FOUR

Jenna Barber

- Fourth-year Arts student from Saskatoon.
- MVP of 2005/06 CIS final game where she scored the gold-medal winning goal.
- Third in conference scoring with five goals and three assists in four games.

Taryn Barry

- Fourth-year Phys Ed & Rec student from Edmonton.
- Scored series-winning goal in the 2005/06 Canada West final.
- Tied for fifth in conference scoring with five goals.

Lindsay McAlpine

- Fourth-year Education student from Edmonton.
- Scored short-handed to open the scoring in the 2005/06 CIS semi-final.
- Second in conference scoring with five goals and six assists.

Tarin Podloski

- Third-year Ag/For student from Edmonton.
- Member of Canadian U-22
- Conference scoring leader with five goals and seven assists.

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