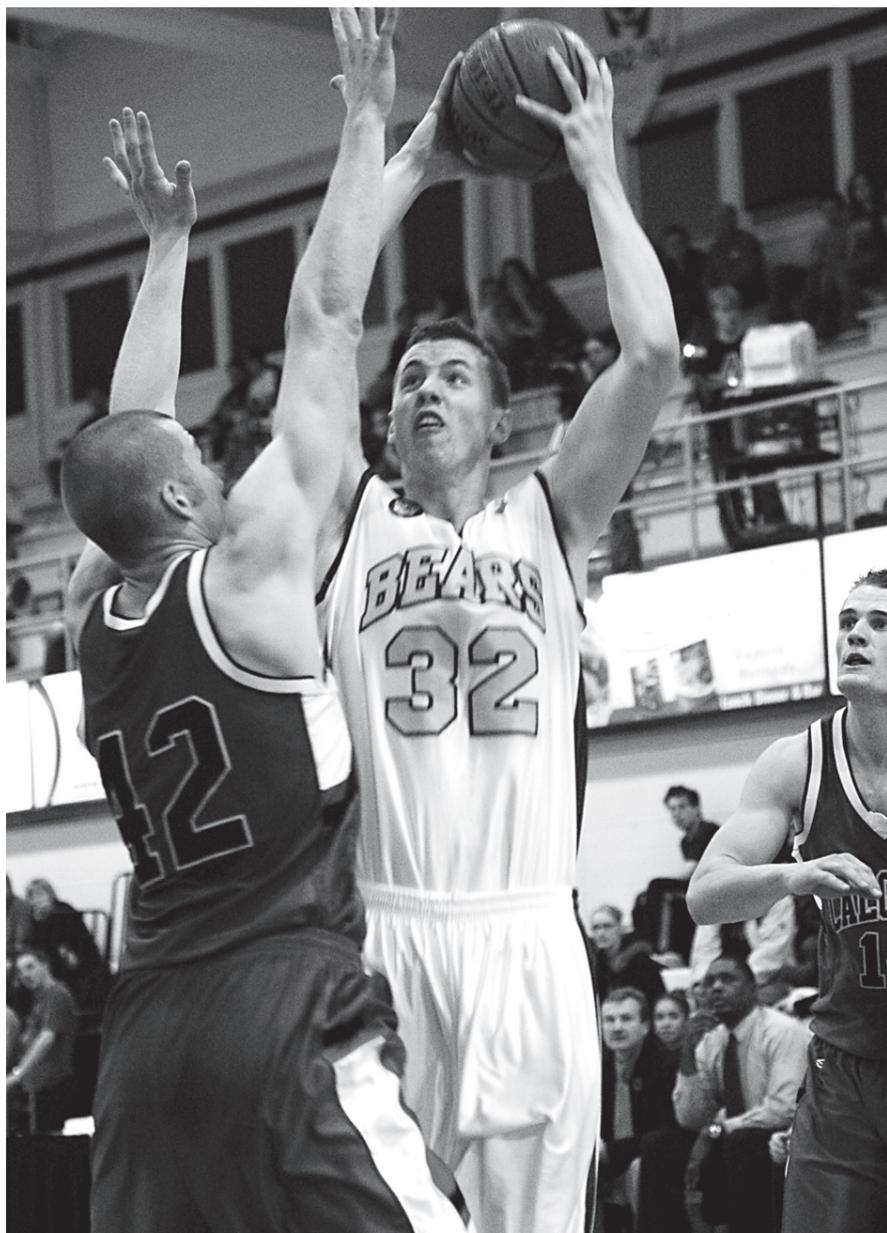




FILE PHOTO: PETE YEE

TAKING IT TO THE HOLE Kara Stevens (6) and her teammates will be in tough versus Calgary.



FILE PHOTO: LEANNE FONG

REPEAT Scott Gordon (32) and the Bears will be looking to continue their success against the Dinos.

Streaking basketball squads set to host Dinos

Pandas look to continue winning ways against provincial rivals

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

After dismantling Brandon 89–24 last weekend, the fifth-ranked Pandas basketball squad will face a more evenly matched foe when they host the Calgary Dinos, a team that Alberta interim head coach Scott Edwards believes resembles his own in many ways.

"We play similar styles in that we both like to press a lot, trap around the floor, and get out and run," Edwards said.

The Dinos will enter the Main Gym in an unfamiliar place this weekend: third in the Canada West Mountain Division. The past few seasons saw the Dinos (3–3) come to Edmonton in a battle for top spot while the Pandas were hoping to make the standings a little tighter with a pair of wins. Now Alberta (5–1) will be looking to stay with or overtake the Saskatchewan Huskies (5–1) for first place.

Still, while their early season positioning has flipped, the Dinos high-paced game may cause the Pandas some trouble.

"They're an up-tempo team; they play a five-out offence and really like to penetrate. They like to full-court pressure and half-court trap, so there's a lot of thinking involved this weekend," Edwards said. "[We need to be better at] defending the three-point shot, for sure, and defending penetration; we've had difficult time the last few weeks at defending penetration, so if we shore that up, we should be fine."

In response, Alberta will need to bring the same defensive intensity that has seen them sport the third-best defence in Canada West this season.

"Our overall commitment to team defence has been great. We have our lapses, as every team does, but most nights and most minutes on

the floor, we really commit to our team defensive philosophy, and that's been fun to watch," Edwards noted. "We're a small team, so we have to commit to rebounding, and the only games we've lost this year [including exhibition play] are the three games we've been out-rebounded. When we rebound, we play well."

To counter the defensive pressure from the quick Calgary guards, the Pandas will look to their post depth. Forwards Trish Ariss, Kristin Jarock, Natalie Kiernan and Michelle Anderson have all led the team in scoring at one point this season, and post Meghan Knowles worked herself into the starting lineup in the win over Brandon after coming in as a reserve to start the season.

"We need to use our strength inside. Our play will probably even out, but the strength of our team versus them is our inside play with Trish and [Kristin]," Edwards explained. "Meghan Knowles has been a tremendous boost for our team off the bench. She's a hardworking kid, and she's a tough kid inside. Even though she's undersized in the post, she works really hard and probably outworks everyone she plays."

Despite their depth, Edwards is concerned over the team's lack of a go-to scorer. Alberta has been led in scoring by five different players through six games. Only Ariss has topped the score sheet twice.

"Having a scoring-by-committee can be tough on a team because you don't know who it's going to be every night, so we need to see some more consistent effort from our stars in terms of scoring more and consistently throughout games," Edwards admitted. "I'd like to see Michelle Smith and Jarock score a little more and take some pressure off some kids."

The games tipoff at 6pm on Friday and Saturday in the Main Gym.

Bears hope to end three-game losing skid against southern foes

NICK FROST
Sports Staff

The Golden Bears basketball team finds themselves back at .500 and mired in a three-game losing slump after dropping this past weekend's action against both Regina and Brandon. The team is looking to regroup against a squad with an identical 3–3 record, in a homestand against the University of Calgary Dinos this weekend.

Alberta head coach Don Horwood is relieved to be home, and attributes spending so much time as the visitor as one of the reasons for their recent cold streak.

"One of our biggest problems is playing on the road—we're playing like the Oilers on the road," Horwood said. "Winning away from our building—especially in our division, right now, with the teams so even—is very hard. Overall, though, I'm not unhappy with our position. The teams that we're tied with right now have played four home games, and we've only played two."

However, the problems of playing on the road pale in comparison to the issues of consistency and effort for the Bears—especially when it comes to playing both sides of the floor. While offensive production has been decent—the Bears have a field-goal percentage hovering around the .500 mark in their three losses—the same cannot be said for team defence.

"There's definitely not a consistent effort coming from some of our key players—and I'm talking about effort on both ends," Horwood admitted. "It's one thing to be able to score; but you have to be able to stop people from scoring as well. Some of our players will score very few points one night, and then score 20 the next night—we just can't afford to have that kind of

inconsistency."

Part of their inconsistency on the court can, according to Horwood, be attributed to a lack of chemistry. The Bears have five new faces earning playing time this year, and only post Scott Gordon remains from last season's starting lineup. Additionally, the Bears have yet to find an adequate replacement for the injured Tyson Jones, a starter last season who broke his foot before the season began and has yet to play a game this year.

"We have a three-guard spot that we've tried with a few guys—Andrew Parker, Neb Aleksic, Jeff Lander, Jamal Bara—but it hasn't seen consistent performances from anyone yet to say, 'That's the guy we have to go with all the time,'" Horwood said, also noting that Jones' imminent return—his cast has been removed—won't necessarily solve this problem straight away, as he's bound to be rusty.

Alberta will face a Calgary team that, prior to losing Saturday against Lethbridge, had won three in a row. The Dinos boast three post players who will be tough for the Bears to handle: Robbie Sihota, Joe Schow and Ross Bekkering. Also, point guard Josh Feist is leading the team in scoring and Canada West in assists, with 7.83 per game.

"Calgary is a good team, and there's not a lot of difference between us," Horwood said. "Feist is very quick and creates a lot of opportunities, so we're going to have to negate him somewhat. I think our guards can match up very well with theirs, I think our post matches up well with theirs; but it all boils down to what I said earlier: our guys have to come to play."

The provincial rivals will tipoff in the Main Gym, both Friday and Saturday, starting at 8pm.