



FILE PHOTOS: JOSH NAULT (BOTTOM LEFT), WEIYANG LIU (TOP LEFT), BEN BEGLEY (ABOVE)

## Reliving the past: 2006 in sport

From the track to the rink to the gym, 2006 was a banner year for U of A athletics

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As 2006 fades, the athletics department at U of A can sit back and say, "That was a pretty solid year." Alberta's sports teams proved, once again, that this fine institution of learning is also a strong contender on any court, field, rink, track, mat or other venue on which varsity sports are played. But, while Pandas and Bears teams brought home three gold, one silver and one bronze medal in '06, there were also blunders and teams that didn't meet expectations. These championships and disappointments make up the top five sports stories at U of A for 2006:

### 5. BEARS HOCKEY DOUBLE UP

The Bears hockey team decided they liked winning the CIS hockey championship in front of a home crowd so

much in 2005 that they achieved the same feat in '06. The championship story got even more interesting when the Bears sheepishly admitted that they lost the trophy they were awarded only a few days prior while partying on Whyte Avenue. Thankfully, it was found shortly after, but if the Bears manage to win this year in Moncton, they may want to appoint someone to stay sober and watch over the hardware.

### 4. CARLINE MUIR DOMINATES THE TRACK AND THE COMPETITION

How do you spell champ? MUIR, it would seem. U of A track star Carline Muir cleaned up in 2006 both individually and as part of the Pandas relay team. She garnered gold in the 300m then led Alberta to gold in the 4x200m relay as well as the 4x400m relay. As if this feat wasn't impressive enough, Muir was only in her first year

competing at the CIS level. She'll have a prosperous career at U of A and may bring glory to Canada at the Olympics in the future.

### 3. PANDAS HOCKEY RETURNS TO GOLDEN FORM AT NATIONALS

Winning championships became standard operating procedure for the Pandas hockey team in the last few years, but after being upset in the championship final in 2005, the Pandas wanted revenge in 2006. While their season was strong (20-1-3, overall), they had lost some key players and goal scoring was down. Their goaltending was also questionable at times during the year and critics figured the team may fold in the finals again. Not even former *Gateway* writer Jake Troughton, who covered the team for three years, figured the gals could get 'er done in '06, but perhaps to spite Mr Troughton, Alberta

beat Laurier 2-1 to claim their fifth title in seven years.

### 2. BEARS SOCCER GO UNDEFEATED, TAKE CROWN AT FOOTE FIELD

Because Alberta hosted the men's soccer championship in 2006, the Bears knew they had an automatic berth into the championship before the season began. However, it became clear partway through the regular season that the soccer squad would deserve a ticket to the big dance based on their strong performance. Alberta posted a regular season record of 9-0-5, but lost badly in Canada West championships to Trinity Western and UBC. The Bears weren't discouraged though, and fought their way to the national final, where they claimed revenge over Trinity for the CIS championship and electrified the home crowd at a freezing Foote Field.

### 1. BEARS VOLLEYBALLERS BUNGLE CHAMPIONSHIP AGAINST TWU

If there was one team last year that would have been a listed as a shoe-in for a national championship, it would have been the Bears volleyball team. Alberta won in 2005 and dominated the court in 2006 posting an overall record of 34-2. Not even Alberta's toughest competition, the Trinity Western Spartans, could impede the Bears' progress as Alberta won the Canada West championship in straight sets. The Spartans didn't take lightly to being tossed aside, though, and ended up stunning the Bears, their fans and us reporters covering them by winning 3-0 two weeks later to take the national championship. Alberta played their worst game of the season and Trinity played their best, leading to a decisive victory and making the upset the top university sports story of the past year.