



FILE PHOTO: PETE YEE

GETTING SPACE IN THE PAINT Youngsters like Marisa Heylett (22) will be forced into a larger role for the Pandas with injuries to some key post players.

Panda posts becoming endangered species

Alberta hosts Manitoba, Winnipeg with injuries to Kiernan, Knowles, Ariss

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

Already an undersized team in the Canada West conference, the fifth-ranked Pandas basketball squad will be a little weaker inside this weekend when they take on the Winnipeg Wesmen (8–4) and Manitoba Bisons (6–6).

Injuries to forwards Natalie Kiernan, Trish Ariss and Meghan Knowles—a trio that has accounted for 18 points and 12.1 rebounds per game—have depleted a front line that, despite its lack of stature, has helped Alberta (10–2) average 3.3 more rebounds per game than their opponents. Ariss is slated to play this weekend, but Kiernan is questionable and Knowles is definitely out. The banged-up posts will put added onus on the healthy ones, particularly third-year Kristin Jarock, to deal with the Wesmen's Stephanie Timmersman and Bisons' Sarah Holder, who rank eleventh and eighth in conference scoring respectively.

"The pressure's on Kristin Jarock to play really well; she has to carry the load for us for sure," Pandas head coach Scott Edwards said. "We stepped up her minutes this past weekend and she handled that very well, and hopefully she's able to do that again. [We'll handle Timmersman] by committee again defensively, and we'll scheme and trap and press and try to limit their touches inside."

Jarock, however, doesn't feel any added stress despite her injured team-

mates. Being undersized in the post is a problem the Pandas face every weekend, according to her, and this weekend will just be more of the same.

"Most teams have bigger posts than us, but we handled Sarah Crooks, and we just work hard and it pays off. [As a smaller team] our defensive rotation is key, and we pride ourselves on our transition game," she said.

In addition to Timmersman, eighth-ranked Winnipeg features the country's leading scorer—shooting guard Uzo Asagwara, who's averaging 28.1 points per game—and an up-tempo attack that matches well with the Pandas' own game.

"Winnipeg and Manitoba are both really tough, physical, athletic teams who both like to run and trap and press all over the floor," Edwards noted. "For Winnipeg, it all starts and ends with Uzo. [She's] outstanding and we have to figure out how to slow her down. We'll try a lot of different kids—we've got a bunch of kids who

defend really well but are totally different body types, which could frustrate her: Carly MacLennan, who's long, Kara Stevens, who's a physically tough kid, and Alysia Rissling, who's just a freaky athlete."

Manitoba, on the other hand, will bring a tough, attacking defence to the Main Gym that will force point guard Ashley Wigg and the rest of the Pandas guards to be on top of their game. Manitoba is second only to Alberta in the conference in turnover difference, forcing 6.33 more turnovers per game than they give up.

"[The Bisons] put a lot of pressure on decision-making guards," Edwards said. "Manitoba does a better job after the trap in their half court man-to-man, so we're going to have to be prepared to attack aggressively and make them pay for coming to trap us."

The Wesmen stop in for a visit Friday at 6pm in the Main Gym, and Alberta hosts the Bisons at the same time on Saturday.

STILL HEALTHY

• **Kristin Jarock:** The third-year from Edmonton is leading the Pandas in scoring (11.9) and rebounding (6.1), and is second in the conference in offensive rebounds. A second-team conference all-star last season, Jarock has continued to put up steady numbers and be one of the top options in the offence.

• **Michelle Anderson:** The third-year in her first at the U of A after spending two at Mt Royal has put up 4.1 points in her 9.1 minutes per game but only 0.8 boards per game.

• **Alysia Rissling:** First-year has been counted on for defence more than offence in her rookie season.

Slowing stars key for Golden Bear hoopsters versus Wesmen, Bisons

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

Last season, led by post Dan Shynkaryk, the Winnipeg Wesmen upset the Golden Bears basketball squad on a Saturday night in the Main Gym as part of a weekend split. This season, the Bears (8–4) will have two other stars to worry about as they prepare to host the Wesmen (5–7) and the Manitoba Bisons (4–8) this weekend.

"Our defence wasn't as capable last year as it is this year," fifth-year post Scott Gordon explained. "We're playing a lot of team defence; we're forcing baseline; we've got a lot of help defence this year, so it's more of a team aspect. All the guys are going to be looking at their shooters and that'll play a large role in stopping their main guys."

Stopping the visiting stars could prove a tough task as the Wesmen boast the nation's second-leading scorer, Erfan Nasajpour (23.3 points per game), and the Bisons sport the Isaac Ansah (21.3 points per game), who sits in seventh.

"We've got to control Erfan to an extent—we're not going to be able stop him completely because he's that kind of player; he's going to get his

points. They've got some good shooters: Opalko is a really good three-point shooter, and Shynkaryk might be their best player," Bears head coach Don Horwood said.

"We've got to control Erfan to an extent—we're not going to be able stop him completely because he's that kind of player; he's going to get his points."

DON HORWOOD,
BEARS HEAD COACH

"We need to control Isaac Ansah similar to what we have to do with Nasajpour, but I don't think [Manitoba has] a lot of outside shooters; they're fairly strong in the post," he added.

As well, Horwood is hoping that a lack of familiarity will work to Alberta's advantage. He noted that after playing Calgary five times, the Dinos were

aware of what the Bears were doing offensively and able to disrupt key players such as Alex Steele, contributing to Alberta's loss last Saturday.

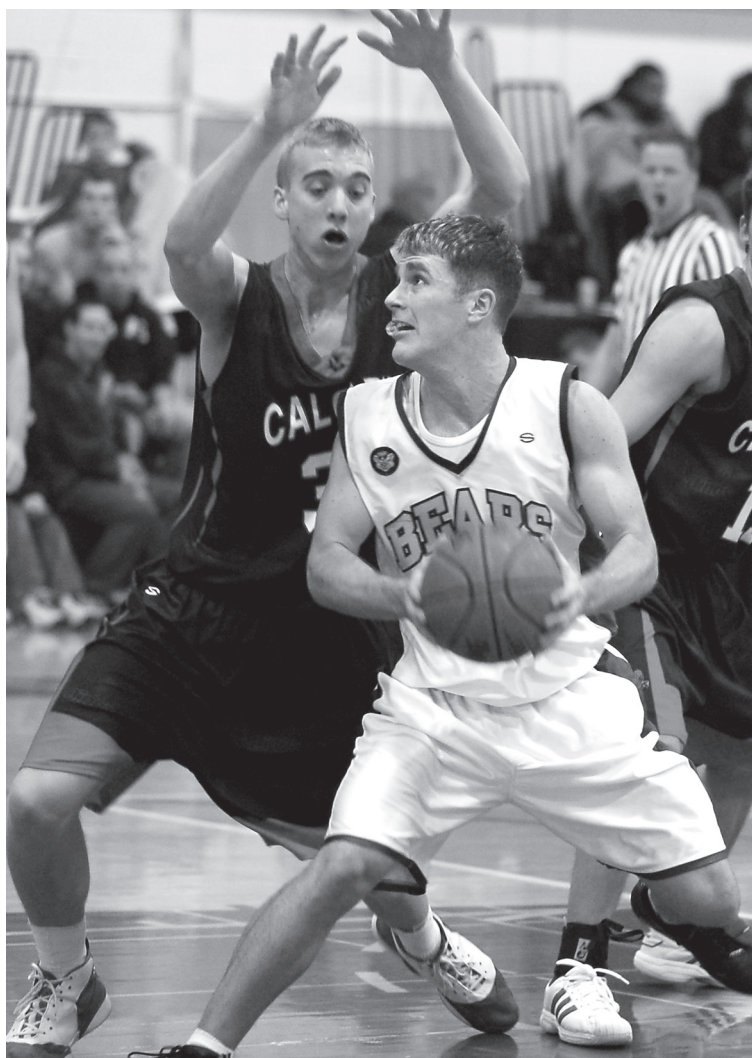
"Getting Alex loose, getting open floor and open shots for Alex is a big part of our game. I'm hoping that Winnipeg and Manitoba won't be as aware of what he does and maybe he can exploit that a little bit," he said.

Another key for the Bears will be keeping up with the consistency that they have found this season. After splitting five of their ten weekends last season, Alberta has done so only twice thus far this year—both on the road.

"We're going to have to come to play both nights—that's been a big thing for us the past few years," Gordon said. "The main thing for us is to be focused and ready to compete both nights and if we do that, I have no doubt we'll be able to take two."

"We need to play with a lot of energy, work hard on the defensive end and be more patient on offence, execute and do the things that are successful for us," Horwood added.

The Bears take on the Wesmen at 8pm Friday and the Bisons 8pm on Saturday, both in the Main Gym.



FILE PHOTO: ANDREW RURAK

LITTLE KNOWN Calgary may have been familiar with Alex Steele (white), but the Bears hope the two teams from Winnipeg aren't this weekend in the Gym.