



FILE PHOTO: ASHLEY SCARLETT

FLY LIKE AN EAGLE ERR... BUTTERFLY The swim team has already qualified twelve for nationals and is looking for more.

Deeper team in the water for swimmers under Humby

PAUL OWEN
Still the Sports Editor

It's been only seven months since Bill Humby was hired as the University of Alberta's new swim coach, but he's already had a significant positive impact on the Bears and Pandas.

Heading into this weekend's Green and Gold Invitational, the Golden Bear swimmers have qualified five men for the CIS finals, while the Pandas have put seven through to Halifax, both numbers up one from last season with three meets to go. While Humby doesn't believe that this weekend will see anyone else qualify for nationals, he does feel that his national teams are still incomplete.

"I think we could have at least three more women and five more men. I'd be pretty happy with ten and ten," he said. "I tried to pack a lot of racing into a short period of time [this weekend] because that's what Canada

West is: when you get there, swim your races—heats and finals—and your relays, it's action-packed."

Alberta will host club teams from around the Edmonton area and Saskatoon, and while the meet won't provide CIS-level competition, it will serve a dual purpose for the Bears and Pandas.

"I wasn't sure if I was going to run it, but we've got Canada West the following weekend, and I figured running the meet would be a good idea because I wanted to get them back—they haven't raced since the end of November—to remember what racing is, so they're sharp for Canada West," Humby explained.

"It's mostly the clubs that are participating, and primarily, they are all kids who are 15–18 year old, so I'm going to recruit them. A big part is getting them into our pool, meeting the parents and talking to them about our program."

As the swimmers gear up for Canada West finals, where they qualified four swimmers for nationals last year and grabbed third- and fifth-place finishes for the men and women respectively, they do so already ahead of where they were last season, thanks in large part to some talented rookies.

"We have a few first-year students who've come in and done pretty well—Katerina Symes made it, Lisa Kenke made it, Doug Rawlick made it—there's a number who have come in and are making an impact right away," he noted. "The standard at the beginning of the year was to pick a team of kids that are within three per cent of qualifying for CIS, and I figure that if you work hard and improve, three percent is a decent amount to improve throughout the year."

The meet starts at 5pm Saturday and continues at 7am on Sunday in the Winslow & Christian Hamilton Memorial Pool.

WJHC proves kids can entertain, even without me



NICK FROST

With the end of the Christmas break comes the end of the World Junior Hockey Championships, and for the third year in row, Canada triumphantly walked away with the gold medal. Some games were nail-biters—like the semifinal match against the United States—and some moments sent us leaping out of our seats—like Carey Price's save on Anton Krysanov's breakaway in the final to keep the score at 4–2—but ultimately, the championships once again proved that youngsters can, oftentimes, make things just as exciting and intense as professionals. To quote Jonathan Toews, as he said to TSN's James Cybulski, they did "a fucking great job."

This year's tournament, however, was bittersweet for me. It brought about a harsh realization that I hadn't given any previous thought to: this tournament would've been my last year of eligibility to play for Canada at the World Under-20 Championships, and I fucking missed it.

I remember being a wide-eyed 11-year-old back in '97, sitting and gazing admirably at the television as Boyd Devereaux scored the winning goal to prevent the dastardly Americans from winning the gold. I remember thinking, "That could be me—nay, that will be me someday!" Of course, it doesn't help when you don't actually play hockey—or know how to skate—nevertheless, I still had eight years in which to perfect my backward crossovers. I was going to be the star offensive-defenceman, pack my bags and prepare myself to win one for the nation.

But, alas, my time has come and passed, leaving me to wallow alone on my couch and watch on as a different group of 17–19-year-olds add gold to the Red and White. No phone calls of apology from Bob Nicholson for not inviting me to selection camp, no text messages from Craig Hartsburg saying that they could really use me out there; instead just me watching guys like Jonathan Toews as he works both ends of ice—often capping off a rush with a Joe Sakic-esque goal—Marc Staal and Ryan Parent as they physically manhandle any and every little piece of Eurotrash that even thinks about crossing their paths, and Carey Price as he shuts down oppositions with his quick reflexes and strong butterfly positioning.

While I may not have reached my dream of raising that World Junior trophy above my head, at least I can go on knowing that people in this country give a damn about hockey at the junior and collegiate level, if only for a few days in December and January. And they should. Many of these kids are insanely talented for their age, and are continuously raising the bar in terms of the range of their skill sets. I mean, you never saw Newsy Lalonde pick up the puck on the blade of his stick, and twirl with the damn thing. These guys aren't playing for dollars, they're playing for their pride and their futures—they have nothing to lose, so they give it their all.

Fact is, watching junior hockey can be just as enthralling as watching professional hockey. Given, a Memorial Cup will never have the same kind of hype around it that a Stanley Cup will; still, I would rather watch a hard-fought battle between two small Canadian towns than watch two southern US cities battle over a piece of hardware that means nothing to them. I'll choose the juniors any day of the week and twice on Sunday, even if they are lacking a 5'9" offensive-defenceman with "Frost" on the back of his jersey.



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