

## Wall climbing over bronze barrier

ANDREW RENFREE  
Sports Staff

Over his five years with the Bears wrestling squad, Jarret Wall has seen numerous successes on the mat, which is quite a surprise considering he was very close to not even coming to Alberta in the fall of 2002.

"A week or two before school started I didn't even know if I would be coming to U of A," Wall admits. "I was actually hoping to play for the international rugby team in Victoria, but the wrestling scholarships and opportunities panned out and the rugby ones didn't."

Wall's decision to pursue wrestling over his passion for rugby was welcomed by Bears head coach Vang Ioannides.

"Jarret is a very dynamic wrestler and very exciting to watch," Ioannides says. "While some wrestlers sit back once they have a lead, Jarret is always looking to outscore his opponents. We are very fortunate to have a guy like him at the U of A and he has been very influential on the team as a whole the last four years."

Wall earned a bronze medal at the national championships for each of the past three seasons, but his goal is to end that streak and place higher at CIS Nationals, finishing his varsity wrestling career on a high note.

"I see that's a realistic goal, but it'll come down to staying healthy and competing well at Canada West and Nationals," Wall notes. "This has been my strongest start to a season this fall semester and I'm looking forward to continuing that trend for the rest of the year."

This past weekend at the U of A Varsity Invitational, Wall finished first in his weight class, but fell to fourth on Saturday at the U of A Open. Overall, Alberta placed fifth in men's and



PETE YEE

**TAKEDOWN** Wall took on all comers to win gold in the U of A Varsity meet.

sixth in women's at the Invitational, which featured only university and college wrestlers from Western Canada, while the Bears earned first in Saturday's Open and the Pandas dropped to fifth. For Wall, the weekend was especially emotional, being a fifth-year wrestler performing in his last home tournament.

"This tournament brings tension and excitement: tension because people are watching more than ever and excitement because this is my last tournament at the U of A," Wall explains. "It's exciting to finish off at home and it will be exciting to wrap up a successful career. However, it'll be disappointing to close a legacy."

Wall's successes have taken a toll on him physically, though. Last year he spent the fall in New Zealand, only to come back to the ring and injure his knee. In 2004, Wall injured his hand and both injuries

kept him out of the ring for a couple of tournaments.

"While I was injured I just really fought to get healthy again," he says. "I had doubts because it's always tough to come back from injury and wrestle again, but the U of A has good opportunities for injured athletes to work to get back in the ring."

Jared will graduate from the School of Business in the spring and he and his fiancée, Jessie, are set to be married in July. But while the end of his career as a student athlete is drawing near, some day the Alberta program may see Wall as a coach at ringside.

"I'd be interested in pursuing coaching at the U of A," he says. "I really enjoy the program and Vang is a really great coach to work with. Coaching at the amateur, high school or varsity level is definitely on the radar."

## Bigger concerns than Rory for NHL



NICK FROST

Since November, the eyes of media and fans alike have been pegged squarely on Vancouver Canucks journeyman-defenceman Rory Fitzpatrick. Now, people weren't paying attention to see Fitzpatrick notch one point in 29 games, but to find out if a write-in campaign sparked by internet-phenomenon "voteforrory.com" would be successful in electing Fitzpatrick as one of the starting defencemen at the NHL's All-Star Game.

As fans and interweb junkies began tirelessly stuffing ballot boxes, many names close to the game—including Don Cherry, Wayne Gretzky and Kelly Hrudey—spoke out firmly against the idea, calling it a joke and stating that it would de-legitimize the All-Star Game. If named as a starter, they argued Fitzpatrick should graciously step aside and let someone more deserving take his spot. Last Tuesday, it was revealed that Fitzpatrick finished just off the mark in third place—23 000 votes behind Nick Lidström.

The hockey world was sleeping a little easier, knowing that the All-Star

Game—being played in Dallas, Texas this year—wouldn't end up being a joke. That is, until four days later, when the NHL announced the rest of the Eastern and Western Conference rosters. The announcement, favouring names who aren't exactly having all-star-like seasons—Rick Nash, Yanic Perreault, and Henrik Zetterberg—and excluding more-deserving names—like Alexander Frolov, Paul Kariya and good ol' Danrik Sedin—had many raising eyebrows. It seems like every time the All-Star Game comes around, the NHL wants to be the ones to pull one over on us.

The idea of watching this joke of an all-star battle every year has slowly been deflating in the minds of the average hockey fan. While the game has never had a ton of success, it has still had its flashes of brilliance over the years: the Wales lighting up the Campbell 16-6 in 1993; the Als (Iafate and MacInnis) constantly breaking the speed of sound with their slapshots; Owen Nolan calling his own goal on Domonik Hasek in 1997—this means there's still hope for the game. All that's needed are a few changes.

First off, don't give the fans the power to vote for the starters until the full roster has been named. If people are allowed to choose from any and everybody, the door is just being left wide-open for obstruction—whether it's from web-surfers endlessly voting for an AHL-calibre defenceman, or the

tech-heads in Silicon Valley running up vote counts for the San Jose Sharks.

Second, get rid of this every-team-must-have-a-representative crap and start making rosters with all stars. What's the point of having a game involving the best players in your league if you're going to restrict yourself on the basis that even the lowly Columbus Blue Jackets need someone to parade around at the Skills Competition? I mean, if it happens to work out that all teams have someone, fine. However naming guys like Petr Buzek (2000), Espen Knutsen (2002) and Tom Poti (2003), just doesn't cut it—these guys have nothing to do with the word "star."

Finally, let's start seeing some of these games played again in markets where hockey is popular. I realize that every team should have a shot at hosting the game in order to be fair; for the last few years, though, it's been cities like Dallas, Phoenix, Atlanta and Miami. Let's see an original-six team host the game; or at least, an original-twelve team. Just put the game somewhere where it will mean something.

Sure, the All-Star Game will never create any major grandeur, but if the league wants to bring some legitimacy back to a game that had it up until about ten years ago, they should think about making some meaningful changes. Until they do, there will be a lack of memorable moments, and not just because I'll have to drink to enjoy it.



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