



LIZ DURDEN

**BYE-BYE BANNERS?** The NCAA's decision to allow Canadian schools could mean the U of A bids farewell to CIS.

# NCAA Canada thumbs up

**BORIS KORBY**  
*The Ubysey*

VANCOUVER—Amidst all the hoopla that accompanied the Bowl Championship Series National Championship game was a small announcement at the NCAA's annual convention in Orlando that might very well be the first step towards UBC's admittance into the NCAA—the largest and most financially lucrative collegiate sports organization in the world.

NCAA President Myles Brand, following approval by the executive committee, introduced a ten-year pilot program that will allow international schools to seek membership into the American sports giant.

"This isn't a massive change, but conceptually, it's an interesting change," Brand said, adding that the decision would likely only affect no more than three schools.

"I would characterize this latest step as the first of many in the process to open the door for international membership," NCAA spokesperson Stacey Osburn said, adding that "the interest is definitely there" to see a Canadian school in the NCAA by the end of the ten-year program, or sooner.

"It's our hope that when we get to the end of the ten years we will have two-to-three schools that are

active NCAA members. The ten-year window also allows time for not only having new membership, but hopefully they'll have been members long enough to evaluate the process and recommend any changes that need to be made," Osburn said.

So far, UBC and St. Clair's College in Ontario have been the only institutions to formally express interest.

While the NCAA didn't mention UBC specifically, Director of Athletics and Recreation Bob Philip had no doubt the decision was made specifically as a result of UBC's expressed interest in joining the NCAA.

"The decision was certainly initiated by our interaction with them," Philip said.

According to Philip, the next step towards submitting an official application will be to evaluate the conditions attached to foreign university acceptance, followed by a campus-wide university engagement that will evaluate what is needed—both from UBC and the community at large—to compete successfully against American programs.

"We want to make sure everybody is comfortable with [switching to the NCAA]," Philip said. "We aren't now coming back and saying we want the students to pay twice as many fees or we want to get a whole bunch of students [into UBC] who aren't qualified.

"To be successful down there, we'd have to be able to attract the top Canadian athletes ... and there are people that have expressed an interest—if we competed at the NCAA level—in generating a lot of support for scholarships."

While UBC would still need the NCAA's three divisions to change their legislation before a Canadian university could join, Osburn said that this shouldn't be seen as any kind of obstacle to UBC's eventual application.

"The emphasis is more on making sure it's done right and well so it's an easy transition for any schools that decide to participate in the pilot program," she explained.

The University expects to be in contact with the NCAA in the upcoming week regarding the specific intent of the announcement and to clarify a few remaining details. However, the Department of Athletics considers last Monday's announcement the ideal outcome to a courtship process they have been engaged in for more than 20 months.

"We do need to hear from the NCAA what the conditions would be [for entrance] ... but obviously the door has now been opened for us," Philip said. "We're happy that the doors have been opened, now once we hear what that means we'll have that debate and see where we go."

## ALBERTA'S HOPES

While Alberta has yet to begin an application process, Athletic Director Dale Schulha has spent the last two weeks spreading his intentions to apply throughout the local media, though he had yet to make contact with the NCAA as of press time. Here are some of Schulha's plans:

- The U of A would join the NCAA as a Division II school, but would play Division I in hockey and volleyball in a smaller conference, as well as some other potential sports—the most notable of which is basketball, which Schulha hoped would be able to jump up to a smaller conference of Division I competition after a few years of increased recruiting in Division II.

- If accepted, the Bears and Pandas would not necessarily move entirely to the NCAA. Schulha expressed concerns over the NCAA's announcement being a "ten-year pilot program" and was cautious about cutting all ties with CIS.

- Any bid from Alberta would be based on the athletic achievement and academic record of the school. Alberta and UBC own 34 per cent of the national championship banners in the last ten years, and are the top two schools in academic all-Canadians over the same period. And while UBC's new facilities are a big factor in their push for acceptance, Schulha noted that Alberta's are head and shoulders above those of schools already in the NCAA's top

division, such as Vermont.

- Schulha also hopes that becoming an NCAA school would increase alumni and corporate support enough to allow for new facilities—mainly a new hockey arena—to be built.

- Some coaches, among them Don Horwood, who's team would get killed in Division I competition, and Howie Draper, who appreciates the increased academic focus in CIS, are concerned about joining the NCAA. Georgette Reed would be interested in order to add an outdoor track and field season, but wanted to stay CIS for cross-country and indoor track, noting that the top track athletes would be competitive.



Can you spot 5 differences in Ross Prusakowski compared to the picture on page 21?

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