

# Silent Smith has loud impact on court

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Sports Writer

From first blush, soft-spoken Pandas basketball senior Michelle Smith exudes nothing but humility about her accomplishments on and off the court. It isn't a big deal that she's been named an academic all-Canadian for each of the five years of her university career—and in 2005/06 won the Sylvia Sweeney Award for the top student-athlete in CIS women's basketball—or that she averages a team-leading 11.9 points per game or even that she boasts a couple of prestigious scholarships.

In fact, while many athletes abandon sports after high school to focus on academics or take a light course load to play for a university team, Smith—a third-year pharmacy student—felt she needed to challenge herself both in the game and the classroom. The subtraction of one of those elements from her life next season has left the Magrath, Alberta native at a loss for what she'll be doing.

"People ask me how I [balance school and sports], and really, I don't know what I'm going to do next year [without one of them]," Smith says of her future plans. She has two more regular-season games and the playoffs before her CIS career comes to a close. "I haven't ever done school without basketball. It's not over, and it hasn't really sunk in yet. Every once in a while I'll think, 'Oh, this is the last time I'll do this. They won't let me come back next year.'"

A love of the game and desire to play brought Smith to Edmonton, and the same traits have kept her here. Every game is big for Smith; every game is worth getting excited over.

"One time in my second year I was just so excited to play that off the tip I got the ball and started dribbling the wrong way. I did change direction, my point guard was yelling at me, but they didn't let me forget that one."

One of those teammates who wouldn't let Smith forget it was her sister, Diane, who starred for the Pandas from 1999/00–2003/04, and shared the court with Michelle for her first two years as a Panda. While the younger Smith denies any intention of carrying on her sister's legacy, she still appreciated the experience of donning the same jersey as her family member.



PETE YEE

**(M)ATHLETE** Michelle Smith (dark) is good at both basketball and school.

"It was better than playing against her," Smith says jokingly.

While Michelle Smith may not have a lot to say, "what she says goes," according to both head coach Scott Edwards and teammate Ashley Wigg.

"She's a great leader," Wigg says. "She always knows what to say to you. She doesn't necessarily say the most, but she just leads by example. She is always there for you, she's clutch, and she'll hit the shots when you need them. Everyone respects her so much."

"Michelle is an incredible young woman," Edwards adds. "Whether it's being the first at practice and hustling hard, doing all of the little things we ask her to do at practice or keeping her teammates accountable and making sure they're on track, she's certainly the moral fabric of

our team."

It's the quiet leadership from Smith that has helped transform a ram-bunctious bunch of first-years into the core of a dark-horse contender for the national title.

"Within leadership is composure," Smith says. "Helping myself and the other players move on from mistakes is a big thing because there will always be mistakes."

While Smith would probably downplay the effect her departure will have on the squad, Wigg says that losing Smith's means a loss of scoring ability, leadership and take-charge attitude on the floor for next year's Pandas squad.

"She has a huge shooting role; she's the one who controls the huddles," Wigg says. "Nobody goes against anything she says. It's going to be tough without her."

## THE PEP RALLY

by Paul Owen

### Pandas Hockey

For the first time in forever, the Pandas hockey team was shut out. After beating the Regina Cougars 3-2 in overtime on Friday, Alberta (19-3-0) was shocked with an upset of upsetting proportions when they were unable to score a goal in a 4-0 loss to those same Cougars (13-7-2).

Special shout out to former sports editor Jake Troughton, who waited for years to see the Pandas lose—begged for it in fact, just so he could have a story—only to see them run off well over 100 consecutive wins and then lose in the national final. If only he were around now.

Also, I deny any involvement in jinxing the Pandas this weekend. Yes, I did say that they should win by seven, but I did it in Haiku form: an ancient art that's too subtle for the Reginites to understand.

### Pandas Volleyball

Keeping with the trend of Thompson Rivers being incredibly bad at every CIS sport, Alberta's volleyball ladies (14-4) took their game to Kamloops this weekend and poached the WolfPack (4-14), beating them 3-1 on Friday and 3-0 Saturday. Jocelyn Blair had 14 kills and 17 digs on Friday, and added 13 and nine the second night, while Darryl Roper racked up 84 set assists over the two games.

### Bears Volleyball

When the Golden Bears (16-0) lost five of the starters off of last year's silver medal squad, we here at the Gateway figured that they would go through a bit of a rebuilding year and finish something like 13-5 on the season. Of course, then Joel Schmuland and Brock Pehar jumped off the bench and into potential all-Canadian territory. It's ridiculous to think that Schmuland could be the CIS Player of the Year—he will almost certainly be the Canada West nominee—after warming the bench last season.

Like the women, the Bears made quick work of Thompson Rivers 3-1, 3-0 this weekend, preserving their undefeated record. Schmuland led the way with 28 kills in two games against the WolfPack (5-11), while Pehar had 36 assists and three service aces in Saturday's game.

### Fantasy Hockey

After all my big talk last week about gamorrhazing Mike Kendrick's team, it was my boys who were set for the upset as Kendrick's DP Shockers came away with a 5-3 victory. I blame Sheldon Souray, whose game-winning goal and two assists Sunday night swung the tide in Kendrick's favour. Now Mike's leaning over my shoulder and creepily whispering, "I'm so Souray," into my ear whenever he gets the opportunity.

This week will give my team a shot at redemption as I face Heather Smith, the same Heather Smith who I referred to as an "Igor Ulanov-loving, mouth-breathing old-man fucker" after beating her 5-3 earlier in the year.

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