

# CanWest crown taken from volley Bears

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Last week started off well for the Bears volleyball team as they garnered numerous personal awards including Canada West Coach of the Year for Terry Danyluk, but despite being recognized individually, Alberta went home empty-handed as a team, failing to medal in the Canada West championship this weekend.

Alberta was favoured to win gold in the Canada West Final Four after finishing first in the regular season with a 17-1 record, but a loss to UBC Thursday night relegated the Bears to the bronze medal game, which they lost to Winnipeg; though all four teams had already booked their tickets to next weekend's National Championships in Hamilton. The match against UBC was a see-saw battle with the teams exchanging set wins, but the T-Birds came out on top and upset Alberta 3-2.

"We played pretty tough defensively and offensively, and it takes a full game to beat a quality squad like Alberta," UBC head coach Richard Schick noted. "We had guys come ready to play. It didn't matter who we were playing we just wanted to play well, and we played well enough to win."

"We made a few more mistakes than [UBC Thursday]. It was a four-point difference in total points, and we made 52 errors to their 49. With all of those things together, that made the difference in the match," Danyluk added. "It wasn't like they outplayed us or we outplayed them; we played each other in streaks and they got the

breaks that they needed."

UBC has been a thorn in Alberta's side in recent years, being the only team to beat Alberta in the regular season last year and in 2004/05. The games between these Canada West powerhouses have been tightly fought this year as well: the last time these teams met, UBC won the first two sets but Alberta stormed back to win the match. Schick and his squad were frustrated by their inability to beat Alberta this year, but knew that to win the conference, they would have to overcome the Bears.

"We knew that, when we were here a couple of weeks back, we didn't play overly well, and we were hoping that we were going to get the opportunity to be back," said Schick, whose team went on to lose to Trinity Western in the gold medal match. "Was it revenge? No. We wanted to play for the Canada West Championship and that meant playing Alberta, so that's what we had to do."

On Saturday night, Alberta took on Winnipeg in the bronze medal match and after winning the first two sets against the Wesmen, it looked like the Bears would redeem themselves from the loss against UBC. However, Winnipeg rallied to win the next three sets, and Alberta had to settle for a disappointing fourth-place finish.

"We started off playing real well, and then [Winnipeg] started changing up their serve a bit and putting up some trouble," Danyluk said of Saturday's game. "The biggest thing for me was, I thought, we just let ourselves come down to their emotional level. They

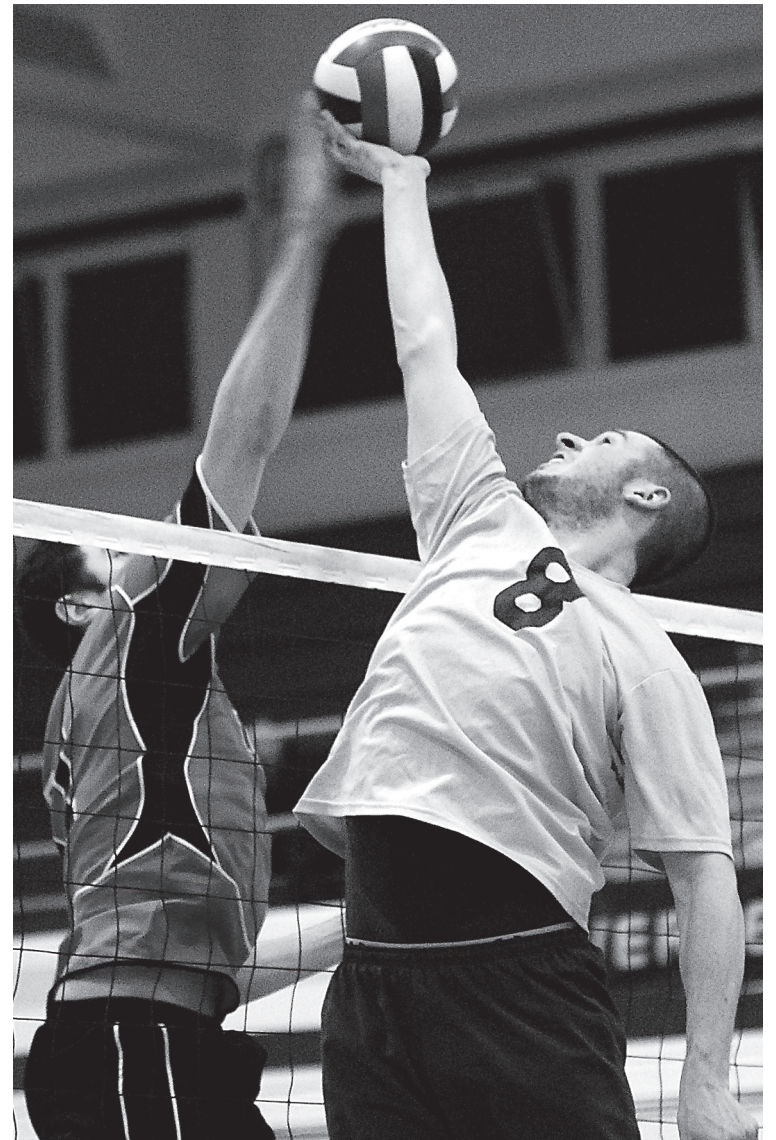
played with no emotion and it was quiet games three and four. Even when we were leading, nobody was saying anything in the gym—our players, [the Wesmen] or the fans—so I think we got in a bit of a trap and put some pressure on ourselves."

The loss was the toughest on fifth-year Bears Justin Wong and Derek Proudfoot, who played their last game in the Main Gym Saturday night. Wong, who was chosen as Canada West Libero of the Year, reflected on his CIS career and losing his last two home games.

"For me it was my last game in this gym and it was a big game for me. I'd be lying to you if I said I'm not upset at how we played, because it's tough," Wong said. "I'm not usually an emotional guy when it comes to this, but I'm glad that I can still play; it's not over. I told the guys I'm going to feel this feeling for today and maybe a little bit tomorrow but after that it's back to the gym and going back to what we've got to do to win."

Wong admitted that the biggest challenge for him and his teammates will be to put this disappointing weekend behind them and focus on the National Championships next weekend.

"As a team we can't come out of this weekend thinking negative things. It happened and now we have to let it go," he said. "I think we're very fortunate that we still have a second chance; we're still going to Nationals and we have another opportunity to win. There's still a week left, three games, and those are matches that we've got to win."



**JUST OUT OF REACH** Brock Pehar (8) jousts for the ball against a Wesmen opponent in Saturday night's loss. The Bears finished fourth in the conference. MIKE OTTO



**OPEN ON THE INBOUND** Kara Stevens (6) inbounds the ball to post Michelle Anderson (13) in action on Sunday. Alberta beat the Huskies in three games. ERINNE FENWICK

## Sunday surge gives hoops Pandas first post-season win since 2002

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It may have taken them the whole weekend to beat their rival University of Saskatchewan Huskies in their best-of-three playoff matchup, but there was no stopping the Pandas basketball squad on Sunday as they ran away with the game and a berth in the Canada West Final Four. Alberta built an early lead in the first quarter, outscoring their opponents 22-9, and kept the advantage in the double digits for the rest of the game, downing the Huskies 89-71.

"It was amazing," said Patricia Ariss, the third-year Pandas forward who led her team with 18 points on Sunday. "We really had nothing to lose today. We knew that it was potentially the last game of the season, and we didn't want it to be."

"Everybody that went on the court played well. Everyone that went on did their job, and got it done."

After fighting off the Huskies for a 63-50 victory on Friday and falling 71-63 Saturday, the Pandas found their stroke on Sunday, shooting .483 from the field and .500 from three-point territory, an improvement that made the difference, according to Alberta head coach Scott Edwards.

"We shot 35 per cent for two games in a row, but eventually the ball has to

drop in your own gym," he said. "I think the shooters really understood when they needed to shoot the ball. There was no hesitation at all, and we were aggressive getting to the rim. They refocused from [Saturday]."

"Alberta played great. They were very physical and we didn't respond to it," added Huskies head coach Lisa Thomaidis on Sunday. "They had us back on our heels right from the start, and then we were in too much of a hole to try to come back from. Today they were the better team."

Sunday's matchup was especially emotional for the seniors who were facing the end of their careers. Alberta's Michelle Smith helped establish their large first-quarter lead with 13 of her 17 points in the first half, out-dueling Saskatchewan's graduating all-stars Sarah Crooks and Ashley Dutchak.

"Michelle's a big-time player, and for her last game in this gym, I don't think she was going to go out with a bad game. I knew she'd play well today," Edwards said. "Michelle is unbelievable. She's a big part of this team: the emotional and spiritual leader."

Neither Dutchak nor Crooks wanted to go home either: they combined for 37 of Saskatchewan's 71 points, and forced the Pandas to work hard to contain them both throughout the

weekend without losing sight of the rest of the team.

"We always knew that Crooks and Dutchak were going to get their points, so it was just a matter of trying to limit them," said Pandas point guard Ashley Wigg. "They're great players, obviously, and we had to limit their touches, and then try to control the others."

"Obviously it's very disappointing, and not what we had hoped for this weekend. It's tough that it's over," said Crooks, the CIS all-time leading rebounder who was given a standing ovation when she was taken out with just over a minute remaining and the outcome of the game all but decided. "The U of A played really hard and they deserved to win. They were on fire."

"We have so much respect for that kid," Edwards said of Crooks. "It's sad to see a great player like that end her career."

The win puts the Pandas in the Canada West Final Four next weekend, where a win in their first matchup against the Simon Fraser Clan will send them to St John's for the CIS Championships.

"I've never been here before, and I can't even put the feeling into words," Ariss said. "We're one win away from going to Nationals, so I couldn't feel better about it."