

Fairy-tale run ends in silver for Pandas

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

When it came time for the Pandas basketball squad to don the glass slipper, Laurelle Weigl smashed it to pieces. The 6'4" Simon Fraser post ended Alberta's Cinderella run and carried the Clan to the National title with 30 points in Sunday's 72-68 victory over Alberta at Memorial University.

Weigl shot 14-23, added a dozen rebounds and walked away with the tournament MVP as the Pandas couldn't contain her in the paint. No other Clanswoman had more than eight points.

"[Julia] Wilson and [Kate] Hole did nothing—it wasn't them at all. They played well, but they weren't the issue; it was Laurelle that we had the problem with," said Pandas head coach Scott Edwards, who was named CIS Coach of the Year. "We couldn't get her off of the block. She camps in the paint and we, unfortunately, weren't able to get a three-in-the-key call on her at any point in the game. If she's going to catch the ball that low, she's two feet from the rim and six inches taller than my biggest kid, and she's going to finish."

Neither team led by more than six in the back-and-forth affair at the Works Field House in St John's, but the Clan managed to stay ahead of or equal to Alberta for most of the game, using their superior size to negate the Pandas' fast-break offence and make it difficult for them to score in the halfcourt. When Alberta finally did take the lead with about five minutes left in the game, poor foul-shooting couldn't keep them in it.

"[The missed free throws result]



NOT THIS TIME Panda Michelle Anderson (23) defends against Katherine Quackenbush (8) in Saturday's semifinal. Alberta won 79-60 to advance to the final.

from just not being mentally focused on the moment and staying within that moment on the floor. They did everything they could to get to the line—and good for them—but they couldn't finish them off," explained Edwards, whose team shot 40 per cent from the charity stripe in the second half. "Free-throw shooting is the number one thing—they'll kick themselves for the next six months over that—but I don't feel like we ran with the passion that we have all [tournament]."

By knocking Alberta out of their

run-and-gun style of play, SFU was able to dictate the tempo and avoid the large Alberta run that led to the 81-58 victory the Pandas posted in the Canada West semifinal against the Clan.

"[SFU] did a great job of slowing our transition down and taking away our penetration when they hadn't the last time we played them. I thought they defended us much better today," Edwards said, adding that his team showed their inexperience in the waning minutes. "Down the stretch,

[nerves were a factor]. Ashley [Wigg] struggled ... making decisions and could've made some better ones, but those are learning situations that we'll take advantage of down the road."

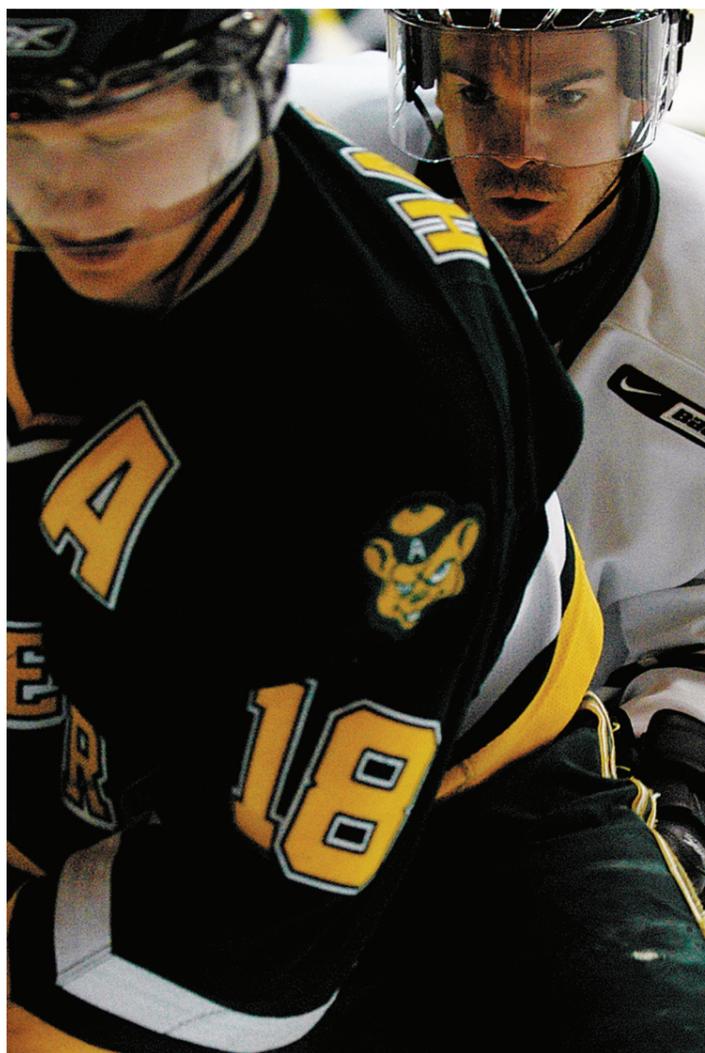
Shouldering the load for Alberta was third-year forward Kristin Jarock, who scored 17 and grabbed eleven rebounds. She also drilled a three-pointer to make it a one-possession game in the final minute.

"[Kristin] had an incredible weekend. She was a fantastic ballplayer [Sunday] and was certainly one of

the factors of us staying in the game," Edwards said.

This is the Clan's third title since they began CIS play in 2000/01, while Alberta won its third national medal and first since 1999/2000 when they claimed silver.

In the bronze medal matchup, the hometown Memorial Sea-Hawks downed their conference rivals from Dalhousie 75-60. Both teams posted upsets over York and UBC respectively to make the semifinals, before falling to Alberta and SFU.



EYES OF THE TIGER Stephen Mann (white) guards Richard Hamula along the boards. Mann's Huskies beat Alberta to take the Canada West title this weekend.

Huskies claw back to take CW title

ANDREW RENFRE
Sports Staff

For the first time in six years, the mood on the bus back to Saskatoon after the Canada West final was one of celebration for the Huskies men's hockey team.

In a tightly fought best-of-three series, Saskatchewan beat the Golden Bears 2-1 to capture their first Canada West championship since 1999/2000 after five years of finishing second to Alberta. The victory also earned the Huskies a berth in the National Finals and forced the Bears to pack their equipment for the season.

"This wasn't about us playing the Bears and that stigma [of losing to Alberta]. This was really about us and our focus; we came here with a purpose and that was to go to Moncton [for the CIS Championships]," Saskatchewan head coach Dave Adolph said. "I don't even know if we booked our flights to Nationals, but if we have to go to Moncton by Greyhound we will."

"It's an unbelievable feeling, taking it all in right now," fifth-year Husky Keegan McAvoy added. "Right from our young guys to our older guys, there was this feeling in the dressing room that no matter what we were going into, we felt we were a first rate hockey club."

Saskatchewan came out strong on Sunday evening, during the third and deciding game of the weekend,

scoring the first goal, but Alberta answered with three power-play goals to take a commanding 3-1 lead partway through the second period. All weekend, Saskatchewan played with a never-say-die attitude and Sunday was no exception as they slowly chipped away at the Alberta lead to tie it at three early in the third period. With less than three minutes left in the game, Colin Patterson notched a fourth Huskies goal, and Alberta couldn't tie it up in the dying seconds as they scrambled in front of the Saskatchewan net with their goaltender pulled for an extra attacker.

"We gave them three power-play goals early, and instead of folding and panicking, we just stuck to our system: cycling the puck deep and crashing the net," McAvoy said. "We could have panicked, but we didn't; all the credit to the guys in the room."

"When they got up 3-1 I think our resolve just got that much better; it became that much deeper to bounce back in the third period," Adolph added.

While Sunday may have been the climax, tension was the highest during Saturday's game which took three overtime periods to resolve. Alberta opened the scoring in the second period, but Saskatchewan forward Curtis Austring tied it up 41 seconds later. Alberta got their second goal late in that period, but it was Austring who again tied it up with four minutes left

in the third. The first two overtime periods resolved nothing but Austring notched a hat trick goal in the third OT to give the Huskies the win.

Each team had offensive heroes but the weekend really came down to a goaltender battle. Bears netminder Aaron Sorochan and his counterpart Jeff Harvey were key performers in all three games, with Sorochan posting a .932 save percentage on the weekend and Harvey finishing at .929.

"We said all along that the two best goalies in the country were playing this weekend; it could have gone either way," Adolph said.

Alberta's solid effort in all three games didn't dilute the disappointment in the locker room after the game, but there was a sense that after five years of playing second fiddle to Alberta, Saskatchewan was due for a Canada West championship.

"That was some of the best hockey I've seen in the whole time I've been here," graduating Bear Scott Henkelman said. "This was two great teams, and they are our number one rival. If some other team's got to win, I'm happy it's Saskatchewan because they're a really great team."

"[This series saw] two incredibly evenly matched teams, who laid it out on the line," Bears head coach Eric Thurston added. "I told our guys I was very proud of them; they came for three games and they just let it hang out on the line."