



FILE PHOTOS: TOP: JASON CHIU, THE FULCRUM (CUP), BOTTOM: LIZ DURDEN, RIGHT: CHRIS TAIT, THE GAUNTLET (SPECIAL TO CUP)

Alberta tops Gateway CIS rankings again

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While students have to slave away until the end of April studying for exams, CIS sports has already packed it in, wrapping up the 2006/07 athletic season last week. The last seven months have seen heated competition in the rinks, gyms, fields, pools, mats and tracks in universities across Canada, but now that all the dust has settled, the chips are poised to be counted. After hours of moving the coloured beads on the abacus, the sportos at the Gateway have calculated the top-ten Athletics programs in the land in our second annual breakdown of which schools have the right to claim to be the best in CIS. See page 15 for scores and how we calculated them.

10. University of Manitoba Ranked 17th last year



A couple of things stand out from the Bisons' year as being noteworthy. First, their football team had a great year, going 8-0 in the regular season and dominating the Canada West conference—only to lose to the pesky Saskatchewan Huskies in the Hardy Cup. Despite the early exit to the season, Manitoba's football team was still one of the better clubs in Canada, and they showed improvement over the previous year. The

other interesting story for the Bisons this year was that they gave the Pandas hockey team their first loss of the regular season on 3 November. It was a friendly reminder to Alberta that the days of undefeated seasons were behind them. Another bright spot on the year was when Manitoba women's volleyball head coach Ken Bentley won coach of the year after leading his team to the National finals for the first time since 2001/02. Freshman outside hitter Ashley Voth was also named Rookie of the Year. Unfortunately for Manitoba, Bentley's highly ranked volleyball squad lost in the first-round at Nationals, preventing them from scoring more points.

9. University of Saskatchewan Ranked third last year



The Huskies football team has developed a proud tradition over the last few years of having a great season, getting to the Vanier Cup and blowing the final to settle for second place in CIS football. This year was no different as they lost to Laval in the gold medal game, but nonetheless the Huskies still had one of the better football programs in Canada. That's only part of the reason they're in the top ten. The Huskies men's hockey team was finally able to beat Alberta in the Canada West final for the first time in six years, which meant that the Dogs

advanced to the National finals, and Alberta had to pack up their equipment early. The best-of-three Canada West final between the bitter rivals was some of the best hockey Clare Drake Arena has seen in a while, which maybe drained Saskatchewan a bit because they didn't fare as well as expected at the CIS championships. Track and field and wrestling are also Saskatchewan strong points, but they take a back burner to the hockey and football programs, which have established themselves as some of the premier in the country.

8. University of Western Ontario Ranked tenth last year



It's not really clear what the Western Ontario Mustangs have to run from, but they seem to be in a hurry. Western has dominant cross-country running and track teams that seem to perennially propel them into the upper echelon of Canadian varsity athletics. Western also produces strong rugby, wrestling and soccer squads each year, which help them offset some of the larger team sports that they don't dominate, like volleyball and hockey. Despite their strong performances in cross-country and on the track, the Mustangs had only one award winner: Jessica Fitzgerald won the student-athlete and community award in women's wrestling. They also won only two medals: silver in

men's track and field and bronze in women's wrestling.

7. Dalhousie University Ranked eleventh last year



The Tigers won two bronze medals in men's swimming and women's cross-country, and placed fourth in women's basketball thanks to a first-round upset of the top-seeded UBC Thunderbirds. They also made Nationals in men's volleyball, where they lost to Alberta in the first round, and placed eighth in men's track and field. Individually, the Tigers brought home four awards: David Fry was named men's swimming Coach of the Year, Jeff Weiler was Libero of the Year in men's volleyball, Ueli Alberta won the student-athlete award in men's track and field and Ryan Haughn won the same in men's soccer. Overall, it was an impressive season for the Tigers as they demolished their AUS competition, finishing 13 spots ahead of their closest conference rivals: SFX.

6. University of Ottawa Ranked 25th last year



Ottawa's score stems from vast improvement in both football and men's basketball—the two teams placed third

in their sports. A bronze medal for the Gee-Gee women in soccer also helps make the U of O the highest-scoring school in the nation's capital. They also competed at Nationals in women's volleyball and women's hockey, hosting the latter event. The Gee-Gee's football team also scored for Ottawa in the individual categories, as head coach Denis Piché was named CIS Coach of the Year, and Naim El-Far won the Russ Jackson award for excelling both academically and athletically. El-Far's award is especially fitting as Jackson was a long-time standout for the Ottawa Rough Riders.

5. University of Toronto Ranked fourth last year



Toronto finished in the top ten in only four sports—cross-country, swimming, field hockey and track and field—but did very well in those sports to get a high standing. The Blues took three National medals and finished a close fourth in women's swimming. Bolstering the Blues score is standout distance runner Megan Brown, who won gold in cross-country and was named CIS Track Athlete of the Year. Mike Bialy was named the Male Soccer Player of the Year as well. Toronto had the third-highest score in the individual awards, but finished tenth in team performance, resulting in a drop off from last season.