

# Pandas draw in local stars

ROBIN COLLUM  
Sports Editor

This may be the first time that Scott Edwards has recruited for the Pandas basketball squad, but he's no stranger to Edmonton players. The Alberta head coach, who just wrapped up his first season with the Pandas, used his experience coaching the womens' juvenile provincial team to snap up three local high school stars for his side.

Breanna Emmerzael and Josie Peacock, both from Archbishop O'Leary, and Jasper Place's Caitlin Stiksma all played under Edwards on the juvenile team last summer, and all impressed him enough that he was sure he wanted them on his team come graduation.

"The benefit of being the under-17 provincial coach is that I see the best kids in the country every summer," Edwards said.

"Having gotten to coach them, I know exactly what they're capable of, what their characters [are] like, how tough they are in big games, and how they respond to pressure and adversity," Edwards added. "It's really rare to know all of that before you bring them up."

His familiarity with the new recruits means Edwards is especially confident that they'll fit into the U of A program.

"They're all really talented kids, and I think more importantly to us, they're great student-athletes," he said. "They're going to be the next in a long line of great Pandas in this school and this community. I think the world of these three young ladies."

The incoming rookies already have impressive basketball resumes. In addition to their provincial team experience, Emmerzael and Peacock were part of Archbishop O'Leary's high school provincial championship team this year. Emmerzael, a 5'11" forward, and Stiksma, a post, were also named Edmonton Public League all-stars, and Stiksma was the league's MVP.



FILE PHOTO: WEIYANG LIU  
**NEW BLOOD** Pandas like Emily Bolduc (white) will show new recruits the ropes.

"Caitlin is probably the most talented kid to come out of Edmonton in quite a while," Edwards said. "She has great instincts on both ends of the floor; she's a really good rebounder, and she has strong moves inside. We expect she'll be able to step in and contribute right away."

"Breanna's got great hands and rebounds well; she's an all-around great team player," he continued. "Josie is super-athletic and is a great defender on the ball."

That the three new Pandas are all from Edmonton is no coincidence: it was Edwards' goal to fill his team with the best players the city has to offer.

"I had a list of kids from across the

country, and evaluated them against our local kids, and to bring kids from out of town, they've got to show something pretty special when you've got such great local talent," he said. "Our recruiting starts at home, and if we've got local kids, it's important to make sure we keep them here."

An additional advantage to recruiting from area high schools is that Emmerzael, Peacock, and Stiksma have already begun summer training.

"That's another benefit of having great local players, that they can instantly start to bond with the girls who are already here, and it won't be such a shock to them in the fall," Edwards explained.

# Boras' MLB draft tactics are boring



PAUL OWEN

MLB's first-year player draft goes today and tomorrow in Orlando, and when Georgia Tech catcher Matt Weiters—the consensus best college position player—starts dropping down draft boards, there will only be one thought running through his head: "This is all Scott Boras' fault."

Boras, the super-agent who negotiated Alex Rodriguez's record-setting \$252 million deal in 2001, has built a reputation throughout the baseball world of being the best agent in the business. When someone signs a nine-digit contract, more often than not they're a Boras client—including 2006's big winners Carlos Lee, Barry Zito and Daisuke Matsuzaka.

The problem with Boras is that he brings this same "All about the Benjamins" attitude to the table after the draft. Boras hires former players as amateur scouts and sends them across the Americas to find the best young talent. Then, particularly in Canada and the United States, where players must be drafted (Latin American players sign as free agents), Boras signs on as an advisor to high school prep stars,

offering to help them negotiate a deal once they've been picked.

Unfortunately for the general managers sitting at the other side of the negotiating table, they really have no leverage. Boras begins proceedings by asking for a huge sum of money, and if teams don't wish to pay it, Boras' high school clients can just pack their bags and head off for four years of college ball before reentering the draft.

This results in situations like that of Luke Hochevar, whom the Los Angeles Dodgers drafted in both 2002 (39th round) and 2005 (40th overall). He signed neither time, and they watched him go first overall to Kansas City in last summer's draft.

And these holdouts aren't even discriminatory; this isn't Steve Francis crying at the NBA draft because he didn't want to play in Vancouver. Boras' guys will make choices like turning down millions to play in LA to make slightly more millions in a place like Kansas City, where the weather isn't perfect every single day and the groupies don't wax as thoroughly. It isn't even a case of a first-rounder wanting to get paid: a talented Boras client will demand millions regardless of draft position.

Boras' bargaining strategy makes it impossible for many teams to sign his players. The Toronto Blue Jays regularly spend under \$4 million total in signing bonuses for all their picks in a 50-round

draft in any given year; Hochevar received a \$3.5 million bonus on his contract last season. Boras' outrageous demands have lead Jays GM JP Ricciardi to declare that he wouldn't draft a Boras client with either of his two first round picks this year. And the Jays aren't alone in their inability to pay for Boras' advisees: Jonathan Mayo's latest mock draft on MLB.com has Weiters dropping all the way to the San Francisco Giants at the tenth pick. This comes despite the fact that he's probably one of the four best players in the draft, and will likely zip through the minor league system—a plus for teams that can't afford to wait five years for a star.

Basically, Scott Boras keeps the best players from going to the worst teams, and instead facilitates a system that allows the Yankees, Red Sox and other "haves" to snatch up some of the best baseball prospects out there. Sure, the strategy works great for Boras and his clients, who almost always end up getting paid, but what about those teams who lose their first-round pick because Boras wanted him to be paid more than most of the guys on the big-league roster? These clubs are held hostage by the thought that they could draft a guy second overall and have him wind up going to another team. So they shell out their millions and pray that the players turn out, while Boras takes his seven per cent, chucks it into his money silo and dives in for a swim, Scrooge McDuck-style.

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