

# Gateway sees future, uses powers for good

Thanks to our deep understanding of spiritual vibrations and cunning reading of tea leaves, we are able to exclusively predict what's in store for some of the University of Alberta's biggest teams. Repeats, three-peats, disappointments: it's all here



SPORTS  
STAFF

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Commentary

We've been looking into our special crystal bocce balls, and what we see is a successful season for most of the University of Alberta's major teams—or those that draw the largest crowds, at least. The Golden Bears and Pandas collected quite an arsenal of medals, banners, and trophies last year, and even though a lot of the stellar athletes responsible for them have graduated, the stars—and the very informative lunar eclipse this week—tell us that there will be more than a few repeats. We've translated the mystical energies, and what follows are the spirits—and our—best guesses as how some of the 2007/08 seasons will turn out.

## Bears Volleyball

There's a simple formula for predicting the success of a CIS team before the season even starts: consider the team performance last year, then look at the roster to see how many players are returning. Write it down—it'll help you win bets with friends, or in my case fellow Gatewayers.

Judging by said surefire criteria, the Bears volleyball team looks to be in pretty good shape for the 2007/08 season. The only graduating players last year were Justin Wong and Derek Proudfoot, so there are still plenty of returnees from the Bears' CIS silver-medal run last year.

Kevin Hatch will slide easily into the void left by Wong at the libero position because he played about half the games last season. Several other starters are also returning, including captain Brock Pehar, right side Joel Schmuland, middle Adam Kaminski, and left sides Thomas Jarmoc and Tim Gourlay, all of whom were

instrumental in achieving Alberta's 17-1 regular season record.

In addition to the strong returning lineup, 2006/07 CIS Coach of the Year Terry Danyluk always has a strong off-season recruitment campaign, in a large part because Alberta has had one of the strongest volleyball programs in Canada over the last few years. Look for a combination of talented returning veterans and some young, athletic rookies to propel the Bears to the top of CIS.

My prediction for Bears Volleyball is a podium finish at the CIS national championship in March, and I don't think aiming for gold is unrealistic.

—Andrew Renfree, Sports Staff

## Pandas Volleyball

During the summer, I started including the word "boss" (as an adjective) in my lexicon as a way of better describing things that I felt were above-average or of great stature. I'm picky with its use, too. As my friends will tell you, I don't just go throwing around that word at anything and everything.

So, why mention this? It's because I get the feeling that when I look back on the 2007/08 season of Pandas volleyball, I'm going to be saying, "that was totally boss."

Rather, this season elicits a good feeling from me because of the momentum carried over from last year's triumph at the Canada West Championships, as well as in the national final against Laval. Added to that is the fact that almost all of the core pieces of Laurie Eisler's winning formula from last year are still intact for the upcoming season, some having been in game shape—and playing for Canada—all summer.

Reigning CIS Player of the Year Tiffany Dodds and CIS tournament all-stars Jocelyn Blair and Darryl Roper have been putting in time on the court, participating in the Universiade Games as members of Team Canada. Their abilities can only have gotten better with the interna-

tional exposure and elite coaching, and they will have that extra bit of experience up their sleeves when called upon to lead the

Pandas' charge against some of the other stronger teams in Canada West and CIS.

Look for the Pandas to, once again, be blocking, hitting and serving their way to the top of the Canada West standings this year as they begin their quest for back-to-back CIS titles.

—Nick Frost, Sports Staff

## Bears Football

Another solid, if slightly unfair, way to make a season prediction is to wait until after the first game before deciding how the team will fare. That's the approach I took for football. After all, you never really know what will become of off-season changes during the regular season, so it helps to wait a game or two before locking in your pick.

If the first game is indicative of the season to come, the Bears football team might be in for a rough ride. Saskatchewan disposed easily of the Green and Gold, winning 45-14 in the first regular season match on Friday. In Alberta's defence, they had an uphill battle. The Huskies are perennial Vanier Cup contenders, and the game was held at Saskatchewan's home field with 5000-plus fans cheering them on.

But even with the tough loss to Saskatchewan behind them, Alberta still faces many obstacles in 2007. Alberta starting quarterback Quade Armstrong is only in his second year, and has yet to prove that he can lead an offence consistently. On Friday he only threw for one touchdown pass, and will have to improve those numbers if he wants to lead Alberta to offensive success. The defensive secondary is also full of young faces, with corner Jason James and defensive halfbacks Neil Ternovatsky and Steve Boyko all having graduated last year.

And it wasn't only players who left the organization. Rick Walters has stepped in as Alberta's new offensive coordinator after Terry Eisler left for a job with the Eskimos. It could take Walters a while to grasp the role and for the players to adjust to his coaching style. Head coach Jerry Friesen has declared that he's aiming for a playoff berth for his Bears, but that will be a tall order. Unfortunately, I think Alberta will miss the playoffs again for the second consecutive year.

—Andrew Renfree, Sports Staff

## Pandas Basketball

I've consulted deeply with my Inner Eye, and the way it blinks twice for "yes" tells me that this could very well be the year for Pandas basketball. The team's exhilarating playoff run last season, which led them all the way to a silver medal at nationals, was a surprise to many outsiders.

The team boasted only one fifth-year player (though that was centrepiece Michelle Smith), came off a losing record the year before, and were led by an interim coach, Scott Edwards.

Well, Edwards is back for good (with the 2006/07 CIS Coach of the Year award on his shelf), the roster is stacked with a lot of fourth-years who now have playoff experience, and everyone will undoubtedly be buoyed by last year's success. It's many of those fourth-years who are really the ones to watch this year: forwards Kristin Jarock and Trish Ariss, as well as point guard Ashley Wigg, will make themselves known on the court.

I won't go so far as to predict a nationals win for the Pandas, but I would be surprised if they didn't make it to the CIS finals again this year. They're going to be the team to beat in Canada West, and this year, they have a reputation to uphold.

—Robin Collum, Sports Editor

## Bears Basketball

After a second-straight playoff loss at the hands of the Saskatchewan Huskies last year, the Golden Bears hardwood squad should have plenty of motivation to get past their Eastern rivals. Unfortunately for them, two of their starters graduated last season. Even more unfortunate: Andrew Spagrud didn't.

Saskatchewan's all-Canadian has been the bane of the Bears' existence for his four years in CIS, and this year should be no different. While the Bears should have the guards to almost replace the loss of versatile wingman Tyson Jones, they will sorely be lacking up the middle, where they lost conference all-star Scott Gordon. Gordon was the team's top inside scoring threat, as well as often responsible for guarding the opponent's big guy.

The Bears will rely heavily on fifth-year guard Alex Steele for offence, and hope that he provides more consistent numbers than a year ago, when he was capable of both breaking out for 30 or slumping through a single-digit effort. Efficient point guard CG Morrison returns for his second year with the Bears and will be counted on to provide secondary scoring, while one of Scott Leigh, Neb Aleksic and Andrew Parker will step into Jones' role in the backcourt.

Up front, Justin Van Loo should take over as the top scoring option from Gordon, while 6'10" fifth-year centre Richard Bates—who lead the conference in field-goal percentage last year—will be looked to for increased defensive pressure and rebounding.

Either way, the Bears will still need to go through Spagrud and Saskatchewan to make Nationals, and I see yet another loss coming for the Green and Gold.

—Paul Owen, Managing Editor

## Pandas hockey

If I were one of the other CIS women's hockey teams, I would be embarrassed right now. The Pandas have been dominating the league so thoroughly for so long that it's almost like the other teams aren't trying any more. This isn't true, of course: women's hockey is getting stronger and stronger in

this country, and that means so is the Pandas' competition. Alberta has won all but two of the Canada West championships since its inception in the 1997/98 season, and this year will be trying for a three-peat (and their seventh banner overall in nine years) at the national championships.

They'll be attempting to continue their dominance without some of their star players, like last season's CIS Player of the Year Lindsay McAlpine, and Taryn Barry, who scored the CIS gold-medal-winning goal last season. They've still got many of their core players, though, including wings Jenna Barber and Tarin Podloski. Podloski, along with center Jennifer Newton, trained with the Canadian under-22 team.

I think there's a good chance that the Pandas will be able to fight their way to the top, or near it, this season. They'll have to work for it, though, because everybody else is getting better too. They'll especially have to watch out for competition from the Eastern conferences—strong teams that they won't see until playoffs.

—Robin Collum, Sports Editor

## Bears Hockey

The end to the 2006/07 campaign didn't quite pan out the way that the Golden Bears hockey team might've hoped given another impressive listing in the win column for the regular season, but don't expect a similar ending this year.

Sure, I could look back and comment on the fact that the Bears dropped the last two games of a three-game set to Saskatchewan in the Canada West Finals—even squandering a 3-1 lead in the deciding game—and probably use the word "choked" quite a few times. But I'll pass on that opportunity because, like the men's team themselves, we all need to start looking forward—and as far as I can see into the crystal ball, I'm seeing Alberta making a return to the big dance.

This year's squad looks poised to continue laying down the smack on their opponents, while laying kisses on the side of the University Cup for the third time in four years. The blood has had time to boil over the summer, and the arsenal has been upgraded for battle.

With four new players being brought in from the Western Hockey League, not to mention the fact that the Bears only lost one player due to graduation—while still retaining the services of CIS first-team All-Canadians Ben Kilgour and Aaron Sorochan among others—this is a team ready for a fight. And if the old adage holds true that "Whatever doesn't kill them only makes them stronger," there is little to no reason why Alberta shouldn't make it all the way to the end, and even win the whole damn thing.

If anything's going to kill the ice Bears, though, it's that they might let important games slip out of their control like the tended to last year. Whether it's because of the players getting lazy or complacent, or because of huge pressure on the team to do whatever, Alberta needs to make sure to avoid dropping games—like those against perennial rivals from Saskatchewan—when it matters most.

—Nick Frost, Sports Staff

