

Pandas look to keep Dinos' losing streak alive

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Sports Editor

In Canada West field hockey, the list of opponents is as short as their sticks, but competition is fierce. The Pandas (1-3) may have started off a little slowly this season, but hope to even out their record by getting a pair of wins against the University of Calgary Dinos this weekend.

"Honestly, we really need two wins. Two wins puts us right back into contention," Alberta head coach Carla Duncan said. "It's a big thing to ask—two wins against any team in Canada West is a good weekend."

If they're going to pull it off—Alberta hasn't swept a weekend yet this year—now seems the likeliest time. U of C (0-4) are the only Canada West team below the Pandas, who managed to beat UBC in the season-opener two weeks ago.

"Calgary are probably going to be our weakest opponent out of Canada West, so I think we have a very good chance of scoring some goals, having some good possessions, and outplaying them," Alberta midfielder Erin Mason said. "Hopefully we go in not too over-confident."

The fourth-year player feels Alberta's record doesn't do them justice and that the young team can stand up to the Canada West competition.

The Pandas lost both their games in Victoria last weekend, but it didn't get Mason down too much.

"I think we outplayed them quite a bit actually," she said. "Four out of their five goals were on short corners, which is unfortunate—they had a really good short corner unit—and I think we had a lot more attacking chances than them, but we just weren't able to capitalize on them."

Duncan was pleased with much of the past weekend's performance too, but thought it exposed weaknesses—particularly in finishing.

"We thought that we were scored on a little bit too easily," she said. "We've tried to be a little bit better with our cover defense, entry into the circle, and generating a little bit more offence. We've actually been generating opportunities—we just need to work on putting the ball in the net."

The Pandas are still getting to know each other, too. With six rookies and only one fifth-year, learning to play as a unit has been their main focus all season.

"We're working on playing as a team," said Jennifer Zwicker, the lone senior. "We've got a lot of new players, so [we're] just trying to get them into the groove of things."

"We've got some good attacks and good defence, so just playing as a team is our big thing."



FILE PHOTO: PETE YEE

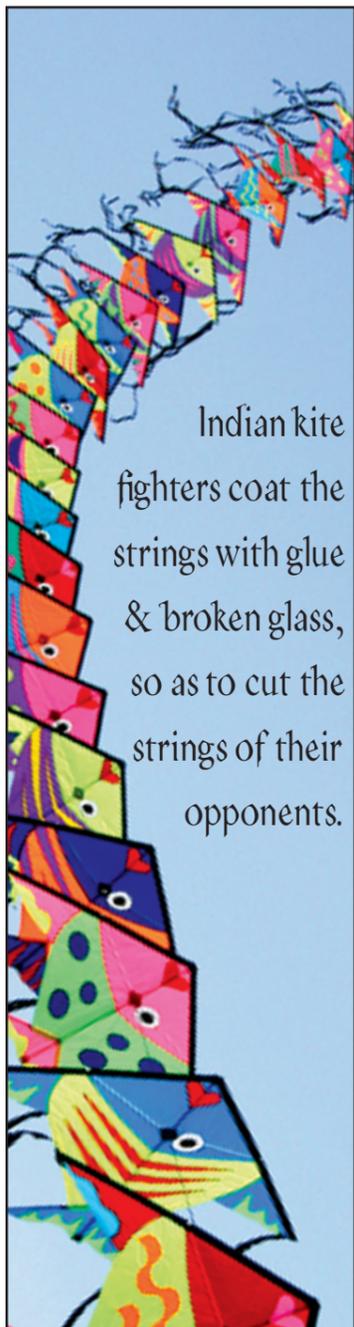
FANCY MASON-RY Panda Erin Mason (left) will be a key part of the U of A effort against Calgary.

Watching her team cool down under the floodlights after practice on Tuesday night, Duncan was optimistic.

"We've got a good bunch of people. We've got a really, really quality group," she said. "It's

actually exciting that we've been as competitive as we have this year, and it bodes well for the future as well."

Alberta faces off against the Dinos at Foote Field East at 1pm on both Saturday and Sunday.



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