

Dinos shock complacent field hockey Pandas

Alberta was the favourite going into the weekend's games, but couldn't manage any wins against the bottom-ranked Calgary team



PETE YEE

STICKS AND STONES The Pandas (white) disappointed against Calgary.

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

This year's Pandas field hockey team have made upsets this season, defying expectations against higher-ranked teams, but this weekend saw nothing of the sort. Instead, the Pandas barely eked out two ties against the lowest-ranked team in Canada West, the Calgary Dinos.

Alberta (1-3-2) were touted as the better team going into the match-up, and were confident they could get two wins out of Calgary (0-4-2) at home. Things didn't go as planned, however, and the Pandas drew against the Dinos 1-1 on Saturday and 0-0 on Sunday.

"It's a real learning experience—a painful learning experience—to have to tie those games," Pandas head coach Carla Duncan said. "I think Calgary was quite vulnerable and that we should be beating them. We need to be better."

Duncan wasn't happy with her team's performance, especially on the first day.

"Saturday's game was really disappointing. I thought we played quite poorly," she said. "I don't think that the score reflected that U of C played well. We've had inconsistent performances, but that was the first time that I think we played poorly."

Though the results were equivalent,

Duncan was happier with what she saw on the field in Sunday's game.

"I thought our effort was significantly better, [and] technically, we were better, but we struggled to put the ball in the net, so we ended up in a tie," she said.

Though not as bad as two losses,

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CARLA DUNCAN
PANDAS FIELD HOCKEY HEAD COACH

the pair of draws hurt Alberta in the standings. The expected wins would have brought them much closer to UBC (3-1-2)—a team they've beaten once—and second place in the conference.

"We've dug ourselves into a bit of a hole," she said. "We're going to have to win some games. There's still lots of games left to play, but it doesn't help to tie a team that we should have beat."

Of course, with any unsatisfactory result for a team comes soul-searching and the desire to improve for next

time. The Pandas have already begun.

"It's back to the drawing board," Duncan said. "We had a little powwow after the games on the weekend; the girls got together and discussed what they need to do to be better, and I'm really happy that they took that step."

Duncan thinks that it may actually have been the athletes' confidence that did them in. It was the first set of games in which they were considered the favourite, and the coach believes that that created a different—even complacent—attitude going into the weekend.

"For a young team where you're expected to win, and you're now leading the pace and the charge, that was a bit tough after playing four games where we were the underdog," she said. "We were expected to win, and I think maybe we didn't deal with that type of pressure as well as we could have."

Still, Duncan is trying to pull as much positive out of the experience as she can.

"It's extra motivation, absolutely. It really puts the challenge out in front of you. I think the mark of any good team or any good program is how you respond to obstacles that are in front of you, and the girls are faced with that now. They really need to step up."

Rugby Pandas take all comers in tournament sweep

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

They shocked a lot of people last year when they lost the Canada West championships, but it looks like the Pandas rugby team has found its winning ways again after sweeping this weekend's conference tournament.

The Pandas hosted the first-ever Canada West seeding tournament, to determine the rankings for the conference finals later this month. Alberta's first-place finish ensures the team a favourable placement—they'll open against fourth-ranked Victoria on the Vikes' home turf for the championship.

The Pandas feel encouraged by their success this weekend, especially because it came against the exact same opposition they'll have to face at the Canada West finals. The tournament has allowed all of the teams a chance to scope each other out in advance.

"The advantage of this competition obviously was that we get to see where the opposition [teams] are at—to do a bit of comparison. It was mostly a con-

firmation of where we're at and what we need to work on," Pandas head coach Matt Parrish explained. "It's nice to get those first games because it allows you to go 'Okay, so that's what we need to work on.'"

The Pandas' first game, on Friday morning, was a 13-0 victory against the UBC Thunderbirds, who finished the tournament in third place. The Pandas' scoring got underway with a penalty goal from second-year wing Jill Morgan in the first half. First-years Taisa Ballantyne and Lili Demers followed that up with a try each.

"UBC didn't quite get their game together, I don't think, and that was that," Parrish said.

Alberta's closest game came against the Lethbridge Pronghorns the next day. The Pandas were able to pull out a 15-12 victory, relying on tries from Ballantyne and two third-years: scrum half Annika Erikson and flanker Christine Pelletier.

"It was a lot of what we expected, really. Our closest game was against Lethbridge," Parrish said. "They were the first ones who beat us last year, so we expected that."



SHAUN MOTT

HOT POTATO The Pandas may not have caught this one, but they made plenty of other tries in their 32-0 over Victoria.

Alberta rounded out the tournament with a 32-0 win against last-place Victoria on Sunday, finishing the weekend 3-0.

All in all, though, Parrish feels

positively about his team and their chances later this month in Victoria, and recognized definite areas of strength in his side.

"We have a really good forward

pack, some strong forwards who can win us some balls," he said. "Our backs were the biggest surprise for us. We have have some new players, and they did really well this weekend."

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