

# Soccer Pandas prepare to bury Dinos, secure playoff position

PAUL OWEN  
Managing Editor

With four games left in their season, eight is the Pandas soccer team's magic number.

Four points ahead of the Calgary Dinos (3-5-2) for the sixth and final playoff spot in Canada West, any combination of points won by Alberta (5-5-0) and lost by Calgary equaling eight will seal it for the Pandas, who host the Dinos and the Lethbridge Pronghorns (4-2-4) this weekend.

"I think [the weekend's] big for the UC/UA battle," Pandas bench boss Liz Jepsen said. "It's huge for our own mental preparation to be able to [clinch] now."

A pair of victories over Lethbridge and Calgary will not only guarantee a playoff spot for Alberta, but also redeem early-season losses to both opponents.

"They beat us and deserved the win, and yeah, there is something to prove. Not only does it make [the standings crazy], but there is a revenge factor; we need to come out and do better," Jepsen explained. "It wouldn't be acceptable to walk in and battle for anything less than a win to get back at them."

Getting those six points could be a tall order for the Pandas, however, especially against the 'Horns, who are coming off of their first-ever upset of a top-ranked team after they knocked off UBC last week.

"Lethbridge, they're on fire these days. Their goalie [Megan Lumley] is hot to trot. She's a keeper from our area [...] and she's flourishing," Jepsen said.

"Some keepers tend to be better at showing up for the game and not training super hard athletically, but Meg does. Her and another player they have, Sheena Stasiuk—who did a number on us last time with three free-kick scores—are a great combination.

"Lethbridge is on a high, and deservedly so, but they need to know they can lose, and we need to know we can beat them."

Playing into Alberta's favour will be the venue. Larger than the field the Pronghorns won on in Lethbridge, Jepsen hopes that the extra room will allow her squad to prove that, while Lethbridge has some top-quality players, the Pandas as a whole are more talented.

"I like the fact that they're coming into our home pitch, and I like the fact that we're playing on our big



FILE PHOTO: PETE YEE

**YIN YANG** The Pandas hope to kick Lethbridge and Calgary out of contention.

Footo Field. We play soccer well on a big field, and it'll be to our advantage to stretch them out. I feel we are pretty deep, and from seeing [the Pronghorns] last time, I'd say they have a few outstanding players, but I don't know about their overall depth. It was hard to measure on their field, so I'd like to measure it on our field," she explained.

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**LIZ JEPSEN**  
PANDAS HEAD COACH

"Generally speaking, we're technically a strong team; we position ourselves well. We work better together, thus our advantage," she continued. "The bigger field means that if you're fast, you can get away, and if you're

not as fast, you have the space to get away. When we're playing against Lethbridge, it'll give us more opportunity to spread the defenders so we can tactically create open looks because it's going to be a tactics game to beat that 'keeper."

While the 'Horns may prove to be the tougher task on the weekend, it'll be the game against Calgary that will hold the most weight in the standings, as a win over the Dinos will count for six of those magic eight points. Helping Alberta out, in addition to the big pitch, is a banged-up Dinos squad.

"Calgary suffered the loss of two key players on Sunday, but they seemed like [...] little nagging [injuries], so I suspect they'll be in the lineup; we'll prepare as if they're back in the lineup," Jepsen explained. "Calgary's pulling at threads to stay alive, so we'll have to be super ready to battle."

The Dinos come to town Friday at noon, while the Pronghorns are here Sunday at the same time. Both games go on the grass side at Footo Field.

of the season by beating the now first-place team 2-1. The 'Birds rebounded the next day and beat the Pandas 1-0. It's a safe bet that neither team has forgotten that weekend: UBC will be looking for revenge for their season's only loss, while the Pandas will surely want to show that first game was no fluke.

## Rugby tackles conference rivals

Canada West women's rugby had an unprecedented two tournaments this season. The first one, hosted by the U of A three weeks ago, was a seeding event for this weekend's conference championships in Victoria.

The Pandas—who didn't make it out of last year's conference finals for the first time ever—go into this one as the top seed after sweeping the home tourney. That means they'll meet Victoria in their first game on Friday afternoon. The winner of that game will then take on

either third-place UBC or second-seed—and last year's CIS silver-medallists—Lethbridge for the gold medal on Sunday. Both teams in that game earn spots to Nationals at the University of Western Ontario on 1-4 November.

## Freaks and cheeks

Considering that Natalie is wearing a deep purple bra, you'd think she'd be sporting matching panties. But no: today, her undies are red. I don't have a matching set either, though. Tan bra and pink checkered undies. Go figure.

As for the boys, they're pretty boring with their boxers today. It's all dull grey (Mike Otto and Ryan), blue plaid (Conal), and not-so-tightie whities (our fearless leader Adam). More notable than shorts, however, is Ryan's actual rear end. He mooned the office today, and I saw his bottom. This may make our upcoming road trip uncomfortable.

Jai Alai has often been advertised as "the fastest game on earth," because when properly thrown with a basket-glove the goatskin ball can travel up to 302km/h. It is also one of only two sports in the world that explicitly forbids left-hand play (polo is the other).

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## SPORTS IN BRIEF

By Robin Collum

### Pandas burn rubber to Vancouver

The Pandas field hockey team are away from home this weekend, playing at UBC on their much-touted water-based turf, which, as I've been told by more than one disgruntled visiting coach, is much faster than the rubber turf Footo Field has to offer.

As if that weren't enough to look forward to, they'll also be facing off against one of the best teams in the conference. The Pandas (3-4-3) have met UBC (7-1-2) twice this year already; the Thunderbirds were Alberta's guests for their home-opener, when the home team completed one of the bigger upsets