

HERE YOU GO, BOYS Brock Pehar (8) sets up the ball for Alberta teammates Justin Merta (middle) and Thomas Jarmoc.

Volleyball Bears bench stands up for team against Cougars

Alberta started twelve different players on their way to two three-set sweeps

DEREK BATES
Sports Writer

Though Joel Schmuland led the way this weekend, the entire Bears volleyball squad showed that they're each capable of playing at a high level. A total of twelve Bears played Friday and Saturday night, each pitching in to the team's two dominating wins over the Regina Cougars.

The Bears (4-0) beat the Cougars (0-2) in three straight sets both Friday and Saturday night. Alberta showed its depth, with two almost completely different starting lineups for the matches and every player getting at least some action on the court.

This made it hard for Regina to prepare for and defend against the Alberta onslaught.

"They are solid at each position," Cougars head coach Greg Berthel said. "[They] can rotate guys in [and have] really tough serving, especially at home. You know you're going to get a good group on the floor no matter who they play."

The Bears know and appreciate just what kind of advantage they have in their strong second string.

"It's really nice having people behind you," second-year Alberta middle Justin Merta said. Merta made four kills on five attacking attempts on Friday, and six of nine on Saturday.

The Bears showed their depth in many ways this weekend. The key setter position, for instance, was shared between regular starter and all-Canadian Brock Pehar and third-year setter Mike DeRocco. Saturday was DeRocco's first time stepping into the starting position in CIS conference play after transferring from Grant McEwan.

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BEN SAXTON
BEARS LEFT SIDE

With such a wide talent space, the individual Bears know they always need to be fighting for their spots.

"It's really competitive—the atmosphere around practice too," Merta said.

"It's always good to practice against those guys," agreed Ben Saxton, a second-year left side who pitched in with eight kills in Friday's match. "We've got probably the deepest bench in the league; even our second-string lineup

could beat most of the teams in the CIS right now."

However true that assessment might be, Alberta's combined lines were certainly enough to defeat Regina. The Bears beat the Cougars 25-17, 25-18, and 25-14 on Friday, and 25-18, 25-16, and 25-22 on Saturday, continuing their conference undefeated streak. Schmuland led the Golden Bears with 9 kills on Friday and 24 kills on Saturday. The Bears dominated above the net, finishing with 16 total team blocks in Saturday's game, along with 42 kills.

Despite the impressive margin of victory, Saxton noticed a weak point in their performance.

"Unforced errors are usually the biggest factor against us," he said. "If other teams can beat us, it's usually because of that."

Indeed, unnecessary mistakes were a problem for Alberta, especially on Friday. They finished with 13 service errors that night, and ten on Saturday. In the only set in which the Cougars scored over 20 points—the third on Saturday night—the Bears had four service errors and three attack errors.

Merta attributed Regina's scoring in that set to problems on the Bears side.

"[We were] just coming out with not a lot of focus, mental errors, and a lot of really easy balls that we usually hit."

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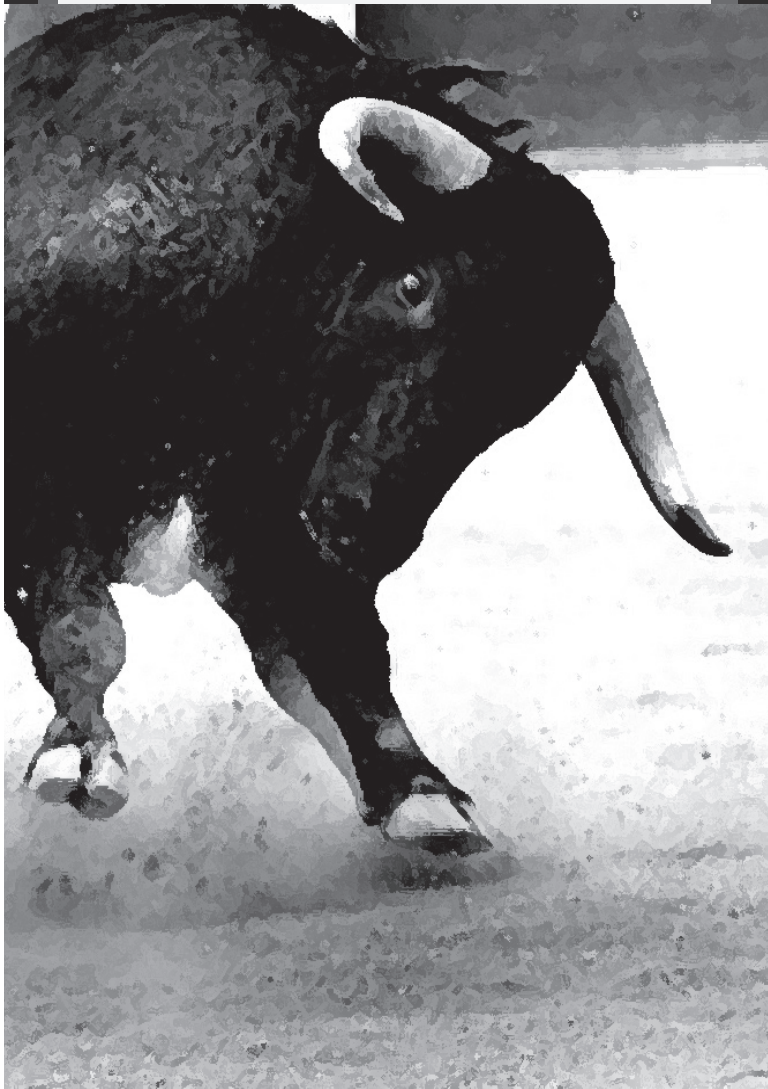
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The Stamford Bull Run was held in Lincolnshire, England from the reign of King John (c. 1200) until 1840. Every year on 13 November, a bull was let loose in the streets and chased by the populace, who carried cudgels. They would hound the animal until it was on the point of collapse, then beat it to death, cook it, and eat it.



If you're being chased by angry stick-wielding villagers on Tuesdays at 5:30, please don't lead them to the sports meeting in 3-04 SUB. If you're not, though, we'd love you to stop by.

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