

Sophomore coach puts swimmers in fast lane

MARC AFFELD
Sports Writer

For the Bears and Pandas swim teams, placing eighth and eleventh respectively at the CIS Championships in Halifax last season was no simple task. However, both teams seem confident in their ability to improve their national standings this season.

"Top five [in the country] should be within our reach this year, so long as we keep going at the pace we're going," Bears co-captain AJ Mahoney said.

Hoping to help the Pandas gain prominence in national competition is rookie Lindsay Morton, who won a gold medal in the 400m individual medley at the North American Challenge in Los Angeles this past August. Morton and fellow rookie Brian Yakiwcuk have already qualified to swim at the CIS championships this February, along with four other University of Alberta swimmers.

Rounding out the list of qualifiers this early in the season are veterans Jian-lok Chang, Lauren Gillespie, Kimberly Hirsch, and Doug Rawlick, and the team still expects more qualifying times.

"When I picked the team at the beginning of the year, I figured that everyone has the chance to make it to [nationals]," said head coach Bill Humby said, who's now entering his second season as head coach.

He says swimmers like Morton and Yakiwcuk are both examples of the program's renewed belief in the importance of finding and facilitating new hard-working and talented swimmers.



FILE PHOTO: WEIYANG LIU

SPLISHY SPLASH The Pandas and Bears will be in friendly waters this weekend as they host the University of Toronto swim team for an "intense" dual meet.

"[We've] been a lot stronger in the recruiting department," men's co-captain Mike Vanden Ham explained. "Last year, [Humby] was still getting his feet wet and trying to figure out the basics of the program. We've had a lot of first-years come in who are maybe not the top swimmers in the country, but they're the ones in the background that are on the verge of becoming the top swimmers."

Pandas rookie Cerynn Desjarlais

explained how Humby's presence has already been beneficial from a team-building aspect.

"I'm really excited that he switched from [the University of Calgary] to U of A because otherwise I would be at U of C right now," she said. "It's only been two months, and I've already improved my stroke so much."

Veteran swimmers say that they're also benefitting from what Humby has brought in his time with the

program so far.

"Bill's the best coach I've ever had by far. He's doing great here," Pandas co-captain Lauren Gillespie said.

"He's very honest in the way he coaches and pushes you. He's going to tell you when you suck, and he's going to tell you when you do well—this makes you a better swimmer, and it makes you a better athlete."

The team is looking to prove its worth in the national swimming

scene this Saturday as they host a dual meet against the University of Toronto, which finished fourth in the women's events and sixth in the men's at the national championships last year.

"[Dual meets] are so exciting. It will be just one-on-one, trying to beat the person next to you—every tenth of a second counts," Gillespie said. "These meets are so intense; it's absolutely ridiculous. It's going to be great fun."

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Wendy March
Field Engineer and
U of A Alumni

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