

# Hoop Pandas hope to measure up to Cougars

ROBIN COLLUM  
Sports Editor

This Friday's Pandas basketball game against the University of Regina Cougars will be a clash of titans—at least on one side of the court.

While the Pandas (3-1) and the Cougars (3-1) have identical records and are tied for seventh in the national rankings, Regina certainly outmatches Alberta's players in one respect: size. With their shortest forward standing at 5'8" and six players 6' or taller, the Cougars pose an obvious test for the much shorter Pandas team.

"Regina's huge," Alberta head coach Scott Edwards emphasized. "Every one of their forwards is bigger than any kid I can put on the floor, so it'll be a challenge for us that way."

"I think the match-up will be a different style of play—what they offer versus what we usually play—and I think it'll be a great challenge for us for sure."

What the Pandas—last year's CIS silver medallists—may not have in height, they're known to make up for in speed, effort, and depth. Edwards said his team prides itself on its ability to adapt to different opponents.

"The good thing about my kids is they're really versatile and can play a lot of different ways," he said. "[Friday] might be different than how we played last weekend, but I think that's one of the qualities you measure great teams by: their ability to adapt and compete on every single night, no matter what kind of scenario is thrown at them."

What the Cougars expect to be tossing the Pandas' way is a strong offense distributed fairly evenly across the floor—somewhat like Alberta's—except where the Pandas tend to be strong on the perimeter, Regina

focuses on their posts. Key players for that side will include forward Gabrielle Gheysen, a member of the 2007 CIS all-rookie team; and 6'1" post and 2007 Canada West second-team all-star Chelsea Cassano—though the latter is still recovering from a sore back and won't be at her peak.

"We're a fairly deep team—we've probably got nine kids who play significant minutes—[and] we're fairly big across the board, so we tend to be fairly post-oriented," Regina coach Dave Taylor said.

Taylor sees a lot of similarities between the two teams, each leaders of their respective Canada West divisions.

"In terms of Alberta, we're almost mirror images of each other. We build around the team concept; we don't have one person you can focus on who's going to get twenty—it's going to be many people all the time," he said.

"We're both really good rebounding teams; we both rely on balanced scoring, so I think it's just going to come down to who does the little things better, whoever wins the battle of the offensive rebounds. As cliché as it sounds, I think with our teams, it's whichever team outworks the other one."

Edwards will be expecting good performances, especially from post Michelle Anderson and guard Emily Bolduc. The two were on fire this past weekend against Saskatchewan. Bolduc led the Friday night game with 18 points, while Anderson's 17 on Saturday put her on top of the scoresheet. Though both had respectable seasons last year, Edwards said he foresees even better things for the two this season.

"Those two kids worked really hard this summer," he said. "I know Michelle stayed in Edmonton [...] and worked really hard on her body and getting it ready for Canada West play, and came back so much stronger and



PETEYEE

**HANDS OFF!** Ashley Wigg and her Pandas teammates will have to be this aggressive on the ball when they play Regina.

more fit than she was a year ago that she'll be seeing more success because she's able to do more things.

"Emily, on the other hand, went home, but she played on a really

high-level club team," he continued. "I'm really proud of both of them, and it gives us another dimension that we might not have had a year ago. We needed them to step up, and

they certainly have."

After seeing Regina on Friday, the Pandas will face the Brandon Bobcats (0-4) the next evening. Both games begin at 6:30pm in the Main Gym.



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

**DO THE ROBOT** Alberta's Justin Van Loo drives to the net. He and his fellow Bears will want to keep up that action against Regina and Brandon's teams.

## Bears mix it up for home weekend

Morrison's injury has meant temporary changes to the Bears starting lineup and strategy as they head into hard games against rivals Regina and Brandon

BEN CARTER  
Sports Staff

Following a split against conference rival Saskatchewan last weekend, the schedule doesn't get any easier for the Bears basketball team. The Bears (3-1) take on the Regina Cougars (4-0) and the Brandon Bobcats (4-0), two of the best teams in Canada West, this weekend in their last two home games before the winter break.

"We turned the ball over too often, and a lot of credit has to go to Saskatchewan for that," head coach Don Horwood said of the previous weekend. "They had their backs against the wall, and they played with a lot of desperation. And they deserved to win."

For the past two weeks, the Bears have missed point guard and assistant captain CG Morrison, who is expected to miss several more weeks of action with a foot injury. Morrison's presence on the court and off isn't something that can be easily replaced, but certain players have been playing significant minutes in his absence.

Guard Neb Aleksic has started the past two weekends, and captain

Alex Steele has found himself playing away from his regular shooting guard position.

"Alex can certainly play the point guard position, and that means he's handling the ball more," Horwood said. "But that means he played a lot of minutes Friday night, and I think that tired him out and affected his game Saturday night."

**"Alex can certainly play the point guard position, and that means he's handling the ball more."**

DON HORWOOD  
BEARS HEAD COACH

In the Bobcats and the Cougars, the Bears will face two of the top teams in Canada West. Alberta has some idea of what the Bobcats are about, as they defeated them earlier this season at a preseason tournament in Victoria. But despite that earlier victory, Horwood

knows that Brandon is too skilled a team to be taken lightly.

"They present a lot of problems for any team to deal with, mostly with their athleticism and their quickness," Horwood said. "And right now, Regina may in fact be playing better than Brandon."

Horwood knows what the team needs to improve on.

"We have to work harder on defence, especially in the low post area," he said.

"We know that we're not particularly big, and we need to prevent them from getting the ball there before it presents problems, and we also need to cut down on turnovers. Often guys are out of position, and when that happens, that results in easy baskets."

Despite their knowledge of Brandon, Horwood says that, at this point, the Bears are only looking to Friday night.

"We can't afford not to focus on Regina. They're gonna be here first, and there's no way we can look forward to Brandon."

Tipoff happens at 8pm in the Main Gym both Friday and Saturday nights.