

## Sharpshooters match up in weekend shootouts

ROBIN COLLUM  
Sports Editor

If they were any other team in any other league, Alberta's 9-2-1 start to the season would be regarded with praise and awe. But since they're the Pandas, a hockey team with six national titles in the past eight years and a history of undefeated seasons, the reaction to the team's three losses has instead been one of consternation and shock.

But that response, according to the head coach Howie Draper, is unfair. Despite another loss this weekend—in a shootout against the UBC Thunderbirds (3-8-1)—the Pandas are upbeat about the team's performance so far.

"I don't know if this is where I expected to be, and it doesn't surprise me that people would be surprised," Draper admitted. "However, the reality is that we are learning; we are coming together as a team, and it's not going to happen overnight.

After splitting two weekends in a row, Alberta went to shootouts against the UBC Thunderbirds both nights this weekend, losing 4-3 Friday evening, but coming back to win 3-2 on Saturday.

"We're working towards consistency for this team, and hopefully this will be another lesson that we can chalk up and maybe learn from and get a little bit better for next time," he said.

Alberta lost a number of veteran players at the end of last season, including the top four scorers in Canada West—Tarin Podloski, Lindsay McAlpine, Jenna Barber, and Taryn Barry—and gained 15 new faces. The



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

**THE DANGER ZONE** Panda Alana Cabana beat the T-Birds' Sawa Matsumura to the puck on Saturday. The game went to a shootout, which the Pandas won.

revamped team is working hard on improving their game.

"The last couple of weekends haven't been great for us, but we've definitely learned a lot from it, and I think we're closer as a team," forward Jen Newton said. She scored once on Friday night and twice on Saturday and leads Canada West in scoring. "Even [Friday] when we were losing, we've been losing before, and it was individuals, but yesterday we were

losing and still playing as a team."

Fellow forward Leah Copeland, who scored the winning goal in Saturday's shootout, agreed with her teammate.

"It's going to take time, and we're still building, and we're getting better," she said. "People are panicking for us, perhaps; we're staying calm, we're building confidence, and our young girls are stepping up to the challenges that are put in front of them."

The Pandas try to bring that

unruffled attitude to the ice as well, but that has also been a work in progress, Newton said. She credited their improved relaxation as the deciding factor in the results Friday and Saturday's games, matches that were otherwise very similar.

"It was a lot more calm than yesterday," she said. "It was completely different—we weren't so panicky. Even Howie was really calm. There was just this sense that we were going to pull

it out."

The team is happy to get their three points out of the weekend, and hopes to carry the momentum from Saturday's win with them for the next few weeks of play.

"Today wasn't really redemption for us, but I think next week, that's really going to show if we're out of this or not," Newton said. "I want to get two wins next week; that's what I'm focused on right now."



TARA STIEGLITZ

**STRAIGHT UP NOW** Ashley Wigg, who led the Pandas in points Friday powered past the Brandon Bobcats the next night. Alberta won that game 82-48.

## Regina brings Pandas to boards

Out-rebounded and out-scored on Friday night by the Cougars despite a late offensive rush, Alberta turned around and nailed Saturday's Brandon game

DEREK BATES  
Sports Writer

In both their games this weekend, the Pandas basketball squad showed that, above all else, they have a lot of heart and hustle—but those alone weren't enough to beat the visiting Regina Cougars on Friday.

The Cougars (5-1) beat the Pandas (4-2) in a thrilling, down-to-the-wire 67-65 victory, while Alberta won 82-48 Saturday night against the young Brandon Bobcats (0-6).

Alberta made it very close in the dying seconds, but the Cougars' size and rebounding ability were just too much to overcome.

"They did a great job of crashing the glass," Pandas coach Scott Edwards said. "We knew they were a big team; we knew we'd have trouble rebounding."

The Cougars out-rebounded the Pandas by a margin of 18—including 18 offensive rebounds to the Pandas' twelve—and despite a lingering back injury, Cougars post Chelsea Cassano had a huge night, leading the game with 23 points and 14 boards.

Down by ten with five minutes to go, Alberta turned up the pressure, forcing turnovers and bringing the score to within two with under a minute left. Cougars head coach

Dave Taylor praised the team for their efforts.

"The Alberta kids, you know, they never quit; they turned it up on us late and made it more interesting than I wanted it to be," he said.

"Every time we looked like we were going to extend and get away from them, they made us turn the ball over."

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SCOTT EDWARDS  
PANDAS HEAD COACH

Despite their last-minute push, the Pandas came up short in the critical points of the game.

"I think our kids battled hard. They played with passion; the attitude at the end gave us a chance to get back in the game," Edwards said. "But we didn't execute when we needed to in big possessions throughout the game, in shot clock scenarios, or the end of quarters."

After that disappointing loss, Alberta were able to keep their focus and gear up to play the Bobcats the next night.

"We came out today knowing that we had things to change from last night and that we had to fix what we did wrong," Pandas forward Trish Ariss said. She chipped in with ten points and nine boards on Saturday.

The Pandas' defensive intensity is an integral part of their game, and was their biggest asset in both the win and the loss. They forced 35 Cougar turnovers and 30 in the game against Brandon.

"We're an undersized team, and if we can catch people off guard in the front court and get easy baskets, it's very important," said fourth-year guard Ashley Wigg, who led the Pandas with eleven points on Friday. "Especially in the half court trying to play against a bigger team, it's tougher to get to the rim; it's tougher to get those shots off, so anything that we can get in transitions and easy layups is always a bonus."

Another bright spot for the Pandas on both nights was their free-throw shooting. They went 15-16 on Friday and 16-19 on Saturday, to total an astounding 89 per cent from the line—a number Wigg said the whole team was proud of.

"I think everyone individually just took the initiative to focus more on them and make sure that they were knocking them down," she said.