

Easy wins leave volleyball Bears wanting more

Alberta swept Saskatchewan twice at home this weekend, but the ambitious team knows that parts of their game still need work

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Sports Editor

Though they won both their games handily this weekend, the Bears volleyball team feels that there's room for improvement in their game. Alberta (7-1) took down the Saskatchewan Huskies (1-9) in straight sets both evenings, but Saturday's win didn't go as cleanly as the team would have liked.

"I thought the first night, we played really well and kept our intensity up really well and played together as a team; it was fun playing the first night," said Alberta right side Joel Schmuland, who made seven kills on Friday with a .778 attack percentage, and eleven kills on Saturday.

"The second night, we let a few things slip. We worked through it, but it wasn't as smooth as the first night."

Alberta head coach Terry Danyluk agreed. He was very pleased with his team's display on the first night, but felt the quality of play on the Alberta side of the net was lower.

"We had mixed performances, I thought," he said. "We won both nights, but I think we played very well on Friday, and even after the weekend off, we were quite efficient on Friday. Whereas, on Saturday, parts of our game were a little bit off."

Over the bye weekend the Bears just enjoyed, they paid particular attention to improving their defensive game. The extra practice was evident in their play this weekend.

"Our front line on the defensive block was good, our back court defence was good at times—but still needs to

be improved some—and then we just need to make sure we're consistent all around the board," Danyluk said.

"I think we definitely did a better job defensively this weekend. We dug up a lot more balls and touched a lot more balls," Schmuland added. "We were better in that way."

It was on the offensive side that Alberta struggled slightly, on Saturday especially. They made 17 attacking errors and twelve service errors that night, and Danyluk blamed these offensive lapses, rather than pressure from the other side of the net, for the Bears' struggles.

"We have pretty good attackers in all our of our positions, but, unusually, on Saturday both our left side guys, their numbers weren't very good," he said. "We have to rely on them being better than they were."

"I thought that Saskatchewan played a little better—they played with a little more energy and fight—on the second night, but a lot of the errors that we made weren't necessarily forced errors. Hitting the ball out, to me, isn't a forced error."

The Huskies, in last place in Canada West, were outmatched on the court even when playing their best.

"They're obviously a good team," Saskatchewan head coach Brian Gavlas said of the Bears. "It makes it difficult to play against them when even when we're playing well, they'll continue to do things that make you look bad."

Though hardly ecstatic about Saskatchewan's performance, Gavlas was able to glean some positive things from the weekend.



THE BEAR-LIN WALL Justin Merta (left) and Brock Pehar try to block a Saskatchewan spike during Saturday's sweep.

"I think that [...] the second night, we played at a better level. We forced them to earn more of their points, which was pretty important," he said on Saturday. "We have to take some solace from that because we are a

young, developing team.

"Hopefully every time we step on the floor, we'll continue to get just that little bit better."

That's Danyluk's hope for his team as well, and he sees the weekend as a

learning experience for his team.

"I think we've made some good progress," he said. "We're 7-1, which anyone would say is a good record, but we have a tough second half to come, so we have to keep getting better."

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