

Cougars give ice Pandas practice winning

Alberta hockey squad faced moments of difficulty against Regina on Saturday, but they kept going and earned a meaningful victory

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

The Pandas may have swept the Regina Cougars this weekend, but they're considering Saturday's game a welcome taste of adversity overcome. Alberta (15-2-1) beat the Cougars (9-7-2) 4-2 on that night, but the win was hard-fought.

Unlike the relative cakewalk of Friday's 7-2 victory, when Alberta already had a comfortable five-goal lead by the time Regina first put the puck in the net, scoring went back and forth on Saturday.

The Cougars twice neutralized the Panda lead, but Alberta tried not to let it get to them.

"Tying it up is always hard to swallow, but we didn't get down on the bench, that's for sure," second-year Alberta forward Leah Copeland said. She put in two on Friday and the second Pandas goal the next night.

Nonetheless, each time the U of A recaptured the lead, it brought a feeling of relief to their bench.

"The game could have gone either way, it seemed at times," Pandas head coach Howie Draper said. "Despite the fact that I think we carried the majority of the play, it seemed like every time we got into our end, anything could have happened. It was nice to get that go-ahead goal."

As much as Draper was pleased with the weekend's results, he still saw room for his team to improve and considered Saturday's tighter game somewhat of a blessing in disguise. For the most part this season, the Pandas have been able to win handily, so they haven't had too many chances to see how they deal



ANDREW RURAK

MADAMA BUTTERFLY Katie Borbely's shot didn't go in on Friday, but the Pandas still came up with a big 7-2 victory. Saturday's game was tougher, but they won it.

with hardship on the ice.

"It was good that we had the opportunity to have a close game because we got away from our systems a little bit when the game was a bit tighter," he said. "We got a little nervous; we lost our focus. So it's good that we had that opportunity, so we know now that to continue to maintain our momentum, we have to stick to the systems."

"When we get up a few goals, then

the game's easy. But when you're only up one goal, and it's tight, and then they tie it up, then the game's a lot tougher to play."

Draper gave the Cougars the credit for making the Pandas work harder the second night.

"I think they picked it up, and I don't know that we necessarily responded as well as we could have," he said. "Kudos to them to come back and get

that goal and make it a game."

Regina coach Sarah Howald tried to take what good she could from the weekend's two losses.

"I wasn't happy with their effort yesterday, but I think we came back and played a much better game today. But I think if we could have done that for six periods instead of three, the game yesterday would have been closer, at least," she said. "We would have liked

to have gotten a win, but at least we got a better effort today."

Copeland noticed the Cougars' added drive the second night as well.

"I would say that they came out [looking] for vengeance," she said. "Nobody wants to get beat 7-2, so everybody would want to come back out hard, especially to get that two points that so critical within our conference to stay in the standings."



PETE YEE

LEADER OF THE PACK, VROOM VROOM The U of A hosted a fun meet this weekend, as a useful warm-up for the bigger Golden Bear Open coming up.

NCAA Division II clears way for Canadian member schools

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

The face of university athletic competition in Canada could soon look very different, as schools from the NCAA in the US voted Monday to allow Canadian schools to apply for membership.

The impetus for the vote, which was held at the NCAA's annual national convention in Nashville, Tennessee, came mainly from UBC. The coastal school has been vocal about its desire to leave CIS competition in favour of an American conference for several years, and with this decision, they will finally be able to submit a formal application. It's expected that UBC will apply for inclusion in Division II competition by the next deadline, 1 June of this year.

"We have a deadline, but we've got a lot of questions to get answered before then," UBC interim communications coordinator Don Wells said. "It doesn't mean anything in the immediate future, but it does mean that if we are going to proceed with an official application, the door is now open to do so."

The main reason that Canadian schools like UBC have been express-

ing interest in NCAA membership is because of the differences in scholarship rules between CIS and the US organization. The NCAA allows schools to give out so-called "full-ride" scholarships—tuition, fees, room and board, and books—while CIS schools are only allowed to pay for tuition and fees at the most. That discrepancy in funding—as well as the opportunity for wider competition south of the border—means that many of Canada's top athletes leave the country for school.

"UBC has long stated that its rationale in seeking NCAA membership is to give Canadian student athletes the choice to remain in Canada," Wells said. "We're concerned with the number of student athletes that leave Canada, that take scholarship opportunities at US schools. We're trying to provide them with the same opportunities that await them at US schools by giving them the same level of support here in Canada."

Though the University of Alberta has never expressed an official position on whether they would join the NCAA, Athletic Director Dale Schulha has publicly stated before that he thinks it's an opportunity worth considering.

"I think we should look at the facts

and figures and try to get as much information as we can and move it through to see if the University has any appetite to pursue it," he said. "With the tremendous time commitment that our student-athletes have, academically and athletically, it's very difficult for them [financially]. We lose some top recruits on an annual basis to the States, as do a lot of Canadian institutions, because of that factor."

There are some obvious downsides to schools like UBC and the U of A—two of the biggest and most dominant in the country—leaving CIS, both for the schools that join the NCAA and the ones they leave behind.

"From a negative standpoint, I think if we went that route, we would be hurting the CIS," Schulha said. "[And] if we were to consider this, there would be financial implications. For us to be able to even consider this, we would have to be able to generate funds through our alumni, through the corporate sector, and through supporters in the community."

"But I think that's definitely a possibility because I think people would see us as more marketable if we were competing in certain NCAA sports."