



**KATIE MOONEY**  
**FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD** Receiving the ball from fifth-year setter Brock Pehar (8), graduating middle Adam Kaminski (3) goes for the kill Friday.

## Volleyball veterans show true colours against TRU

Graduating players put on golden display in the last regular-season home game

**ROBIN COLLUM**  
 Sports Editor

In a single play during Saturday night's win against Thompson Rivers, the Bears volleyball team's three graduating players demonstrated just how valuable they are to the Alberta roster.

The evening began with a ceremony honouring fifth-years Kevin Hatch, Brock Pehar, and Adam Kaminski, and the first rally of the night was a perfect example of why.

The first serve of the night belonged to TRU, and was received by Hatch, the libero, who passed it across the court to Pehar, the setter. He, in turn, put the ball up for middle Kaminski, who put down the kill for Alberta's first point of the night.

"It was like that through the match; it was just great," Alberta head coach Terry Danyluk said. "It's kind of funny how every year we have this evening, and those players who are graduating always play well. Today was another one of those examples—it was nice to see that for them."

Alberta (14-2) took down the WolfPack (8-8) in three sets on both nights, thanks in no small part to the three Bears seniors. Pehar in particular had a good weekend, notching 31 assists and one service ace on Friday night and 29 assists and five aces the next.

"I was just trying to enjoy it," he said. "I've had a great time here, and I've always enjoyed playing in this gym, but it was a little extra special today."

All three players were happy that their last regular-season memories in the Main Gym come from Saturday's game rather than Friday's.

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**TERRY DANYLUK**  
 BEARS HEAD COACH

Though Alberta won in three straight sets on both nights, the Bears squad was unquestionably in better form the second night and their opponents in worse.

The first set on Friday night, which went 25-22 to the Bears, was closer than they would have liked, and though Alberta closed up the next two sets with

more authority, Danyluk wasn't entirely pleased with the way the night went.

"I don't think we started all that well today. I'm actually disappointed in how we started," he said after Friday's victory. "As long as teams think they can play with you, and you let them, they will, but as soon as you start to maybe put a bit more pressure on them, their weaknesses start to show."

"I still would like us to be hungrier. We have an older team, and sometimes it's hard for them to keep going and going and going, but that's what it's going to take for us to be the best that we can."

Saturday night was completely different, however. Alberta started out strong and easily dominated TRU. And while the Bears were back on their stride, the WolfPack had problems.

"Last night I was pretty happy with [us]; I thought they came out playing. Tonight I'm really disappointed—we didn't come out playing at all," TRU interim head coach Dave Olynyk said Saturday. "And yet we thought we were ready tonight. Obviously, we weren't."

Alberta won the first set 25-11 and the next two 25-21 and 25-16 to close it off.

"Today was a lot better," Danyluk said of Saturday's performance. "I thought the guys responded and played a lot more consistently."

## Pandas throwing out mixed signals in weekend sweep

**ROBIN COLLUM**  
 Sports Editor

On paper, the Pandas volleyball team's two three-set sweeps against the Thompson Rivers WolfPack this weekend looked like a standard performance from the defending national champions. But in reality, the sets were much closer than the final scores would indicate—especially on Friday night.

The Pandas (13-5), looking unusually disorganized in the first match of their series against TRU (4-14), trailed the 'Pack for much of the first set—down 16-8 at one point—before knuckling down to recover and win the set 25-22.

"It was really uncharacteristic, and that's where it gets frustrating," Pandas head coach Laurie Eisler said. "When you see [your players] making mistakes on balls that they normally are able to handle, it gets frustrating—and I'm sure it's frustrating for them too."

Though the Pandas didn't face the same kind of uphill battle in either of the next two sets, they were nonetheless closer than the Pandas would have liked. Alberta won them 25-22 and 25-20.

"We just have to be accountable for our play, and it just wasn't good enough," Eisler said. "You work really hard to prepare for an opponent, and we talk about what we've got to do, but if you don't do the simple things and take care of the ball when we have it, then none of the other stuff matters."

It wasn't all negative for the Pandas, however. Eisler was pleased that they

were able to pull out wins from all three sets, and cited a clutch dig from outside hitter Jocelyn Blair in the first set as an example of the determination that kept Alberta in the game.

"I think it was a real statement that whatever it takes, we're not letting that ball hit the floor."

Alberta showed the same dedication on Saturday night, but they were also performing better in almost all other aspects of their game. Though the first set was again very close—going 26-24 for the Pandas—the level of play was elevated on both sides from the previous night. After that, however, the Pandas were clearly dominant: the next two sets ended 25-18 and 25-15 in their favour.

"We were way better tonight than we were last night," Eisler said after Saturday's victory. "If you're not there to see it, the scores don't necessarily reflect it, but right from the get-go we had better control of our game when the ball was on our side of the net."

The Pandas still have plenty of room for improvement after Saturday, though. The close score in the first set can at least partly be explained by looking at the ten service errors Alberta committed.

"It was pretty hard for us to pull away because we just couldn't run any points," Eisler said. "We couldn't score points off the serve, so it stayed close right up to the end."

It was in the second two sets on Saturday that the Pandas were able to finally earn some breathing room, which Eisler attributed to stamina on



**MIKE OTTO**  
**WILLING IT OVER THE WALL** Panda Jocelyn Blair (2) powers the ball past Thompson Rivers' blockers on Friday night.

her players' part.

"I think we were just the same, and their level just dropped off," she said. "A lot of teams can play at a fairly high level for X amount of time, and often the great separation between teams is who can do it longer."

TRU head coach Carrie Barrett wasn't happy with the outcome of the weekend's games, but thought her

players performed well nonetheless.

"I thought we did a very good job of fighting and fighting and trying to maintain that, but for us to be making playoffs, we needed to try to get a split out of this weekend," she said. "We're a young team, and it's some of those growing pains you've got to learn how to deal with."

Eisler also gave credit where it was

due to the 'Pack for making Alberta work so hard for its four points.

"You can see why they've taken sets off of every top team in the conference with the exception of us so far," she said. "They really make you play honest, and they bring a lot of punch with their serve; they're good tactically, and if you don't show up to play, you're going to be in for a long night."