

Ice Pandas' loss at nationals is a win for rest of Canada

Alberta's fourth-place finish this year heralds the start of a new era of parity and challenge in women's university hockey in Canada



ROBIN
COLLUM

Sports
Commentary

Lossing the bronze-medal game at nationals last weekend was probably the worst thing that's happened to the Pandas hockey program since the 2000/01 season. But it was also the best thing to happen in women's university hockey in Canada since it was made an official CIAU (now CIS) sport in 1997.

For years, the other teams in the league have been trying to catch up to the Alberta juggernaut, and this season, it finally happened. Though there have been rumblings of parity for the last few seasons, this is the first concrete evidence that it has actually arrived. The Pandas' fourth-place finish in Ottawa marks the beginning of a new era in women's hockey—one where, hopefully, you won't be able to pencil in the CIS champions before the season even begins.

The Pandas have dominated the league almost since its inception. They have won the Canada West banner in ten of the past eleven years—the 2000/01 season, when they lost to Regina in the conference final, is the one exception. Their record at nationals is even more impressive: Alberta has made it to all but one CIS championship—2000/01 was the year they didn't qualify—since the inaugural 1997/98 season, and have won either gold or silver at every one of those since 1998/99. They hold six championship banners, which is two more than all of the other past winners combined.

If that weren't enough proof of the stranglehold the team has had on success, Alberta also went on a 102-game winning streak that lasted from 17 February 2001 to 13 March 2005, when they lost

in the national final to the Wilfrid Laurier Golden Hawks. Add exhibition games, and that number jumps to 122. They also went seven years without a home loss, a streak that ended this October. Before this season, the Pandas were an astonishing .931 (144-7-8) in regular-season play.

This year, after going an impressive 21-3-0, the Pandas lost to Wilfrid Laurier in a semifinal, and then to Manitoba in the bronze-medal game. Laurier went on to lose in the final to the McGill Martlets. All three are teams that have been Alberta's biggest rivals, but for the most part in the past, Alberta has been able to keep them down.

The biggest difference in the league this year wasn't changes in the Pandas situation—though this year's incarnation, full as it was of rookies, wasn't the best they've ever been. What's happened is that all the other teams have gotten much, much better, and for that, they have Alberta to thank. The fact that the competition was so close at this year's national championship is, in part, because of the Pandas' supremacy in the early days of the league.

The Pandas were as dominant as they were because success breeds success. They had the clout to recruit the best and cultivated that talent in a winning atmosphere. Alberta attracted the best athletes year after year, and mentored those recruits to be the next years' stars.

In the mid-'90s, women's hockey was just beginning to come into its own. When it became a full-fledged varsity sport, it gave female athletes an opportunity to seriously pursue their passion at school. There had been semi-pro opportunities like the Edmonton Chimos or Calgary Oval X-treme available for quite a while, and there had also always been the chance to play at a lower level in ladies' leagues or on a university intramural team. But CIS acceptance meant that female hockey players could attend postsecondary while advancing their game at the same time.

The Pandas' success brought publicity to the sport and helped inspire more young athletes to



KELSEY TANASIUK

continue playing hockey at a high level. The more women played, the bigger the talent pool became, and the more good athletes that all of the CIS teams had to choose from when recruiting.

The way you improve is to play against the best, so once those athletes were in the league, they got better through exposure to the top teams—Laurier, McGill, and, of course, the Pandas.

This isn't to say that the Pandas will all of a sudden stop being one of the teams to beat, either nationally or on a conference level. They're well-coached, and can boast some of the best players in the league, like Dana Vinge, Alana Cabana, Rayanne Reeve, Jen Newton, and Alanna Donahue. Instead, it's just going to make them stronger. As their competition improves, the Pandas will have to continually step up their own game.

This will mean more legitimacy for women's hockey. Spectators knew that the Green and Gold

were almost guaranteed to win against their conference opponents and that that victory would probably be hugely lopsided. That's no longer the case, and hopefully Canadian hockey fans will come to recognize that CIS women's hockey teams are, in relation to their competition, of as high a quality as the mens.'

Of course, there's parity, and then there's parity. The Pandas are still going to have games like their 7-1 trouncing of Lethbridge or their 9-2 win over Saskatchewan earlier this year. But those exist in any league—just look at the Bears' two five-goal wins against Saskatchewan last weekend. But what won't happen again—for anyone—is another 100-plus winning streak or six-year dynasty.

And that's a good thing.

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REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Dr. Gregory Taylor's term as Dean of the Faculty of Science will end on June 30, 2008, and he has indicated that he intends to seek a second term in office. Therefore, a Review Committee has been established in accordance with University regulations.

At this point in its deliberations, the Review Committee is interested in your opinions about the state of the Faculty of Science under the leadership of the current Dean. The Committee believes it is critical that all faculty, staff and students in Faculty of Science and other members of the community have the opportunity to convey their views to the Committee. All input must be signed; however, members of the community may ask the Provost to have their input circulated to the committee without attribution.

Specifically, the Committee is interested in the following:

- Leadership** – ability to provide a vision and direction for the Faculty of Science and achieve the strategic goals of the Faculty;
- Management** – fairness, balance and effectiveness in decision-making affecting the direction of the Faculty of Science; effectiveness in setting priorities and dealing with issues;
- Personnel Management** – issues dealing with the recruitment and retention of staff, as well as the administration of all personnel within the Faculty of Science;
- Contributions** – the contributions of the Dean within the Faculty of Science, the University, the Community (including alumni), and Professional Fields;
- Development** – the success of the Faculty in achieving its goals with resources available and the effectiveness of the Dean in seeking outside funding through fund development and advancement activities;
- Communications** – the effectiveness of both internal and external communications;
- Other matters.**

If you wish to respond to the above issues, would you please forward your comments/advice no later than **Thursday, March 27, 2008** to my attention at the address below:

Carl G. Amrhein
Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, Dean Review Committee
2-10 University Hall
Edmonton, AB T6G 2J9 OR
E-Mail: provost@ualberta.ca

In addition, an open 'Public Forum' will be held on **Thursday, April 3, 2008**, from **12:00 to 1:00 p.m.** at **1-013 ETLC**. At the Forum, the Dean will discuss his vision of the Faculty of Science for the next five years.

Your views are important to us and I encourage you to share your thoughts with the committee. Dean Taylor's review is based on the position description in effect at the time of his appointment. We have posted the description for your reference as you consider and form your views (see <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/provost/pdfs/Dean%20Science.pdf>). Should you prefer to submit your comments to another member of the Committee, please feel free to do so. Please contact any member of the Dean Review Committee or myself for additional information.

Thank you for your assistance.

Carl G Amrhein
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Chair, Dean Review Committee

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The information during this consultation is collected under the authority of Section 18 and Section 32 of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) for the purpose of the review of the Dean. Questions regarding the collection, use or disposal of this information should be addressed to the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), 2-10 University Hall, University of Alberta T6G 2J9; Telephone: (780) 492-3920.

“There's no money in poetry, but then there's no poetry in money, either.”

—Robert Graves, 1895–1985

100!
YEARS
U of A 2008

Student Poetry Contest

(with apologies to Mr. Graves)

1st prize: \$1,000 and publication in the 2008 Convocation Programs
2nd prize: \$500
3rd prize: \$250

In honour of the University's centenary, the University of Alberta Alumni Association invites students in their graduating year to submit poems inspired by the University's motto, and centenary theme, “*Quaecumque vera — whatsoever things are true.*”



Contest Deadline: Friday, April 11, 2008

For a complete list of rules visit www.ualberta.ca/alumni/poetry or call 492-7726