

The good, the bad, and the also-rans of the year

Too busy to watch every home game this year? Don't worry—our third annual sports awards give you everything you need to know

SPORTS STAFF
Drumroll, please

Once again, the Gateway has brought together a distinguished panel of writers and Nobel laureates to determine for you the best and the worst that the Pandas and Bears had to offer this year. At our experts' roundtable:

Robin Collum, this year's sports editor, went to so many games and meets this year that even the kids who wipe the sweat off the floor know her.

Nick Frost, who's destined next year to be the greatest Gateway sports editor of all time, is in his third year writing sports.

A recent edition to the paper's crack reporting team, **Matt Pretty** has been following Alberta teams on an amateur basis for his entire degree. This chap knows what he's talking about.

Pete Yee may not write a lot, but he's attended so many Alberta games as a photographer that he could probably list every single roster blindfolded.

MVP:
Alex Steele

RC: There were a number of outstanding athletes on campus this year, but none made as big an impact for his or her team as Alex Steele did for Bears basketball. In his fifth year, Steele put up huge numbers—he scored 25 points or more in nine separate games, including one 40-point performance against Trinity Western in January. Steele's play was the deciding factor that sent his team to the championship.

NF: "Man of Steele" seems more than apt in this instance, as the Bears guard put up Superman-like perfor-

mances all season in leading Alberta to nationals.

MP: Steele carried the Bears on his back all the way through the Canada West playoffs and into the CIS championships. His Canada West MVP award puts an exclamation mark on an absolutely incredible individual season.

Honourable mentions: Jocelyn Blair (Pandas volleyball volleyball), Aaron Sorochan and Harlan Anderson (Bears hockey)

Coach of the Year:
Terry Danyluk

NF: Consider these numbers: Alberta played 38 games this year, both conference and non-conference, and lost only four of them en route to their fifth national title. If you do the math correctly, it's hard to imagine Coach of the Year adding up to anyone other than Terry Danyluk. Given his consistent success, the man must be doing something right.

RC: No team on campus was as dominant as the Bears volleyball squad, and the credit for that rests on Danyluk's shoulders. His team is made up of great athletes, to be sure—there are few CIS coaches who wouldn't give their eye teeth for players like Adam Kaminski, Brock Peihar, and Joel Schmuland—but that's because of Danyluk. He has the ability to attract the best players in Canada to his team—only two members of the 2007/08 squad are from Edmonton—and to make them champions once they're here.

MP: Terry Danyluk is a model of consistency with Bears' volleyball, as well as one of the program's main recruiting tools. Don Horwood deserves a mention for getting his team to nationals when they weren't expected

to come close to that, but Danyluk had his Alberta team at the top all year and had them finish on top as well.

Honourable mention: Don Horwood, for doing what no one thought possible—teaching the Bears basketball team enough discipline to make it to nationals.

Team of the Year:
Bears volleyball

MP: This is a no-brainer. Bears volleyball was number one in the CIS rankings all season, went 18–2 over the regular season, swept the Can-Am challenge, and finished with a 5–0 playoff run, a Canada West banner, and the national title. Nothing but utter and total domination from start to finish.

NF: Go ahead and raise the banner, boys—you deserve it.

Honourable mention: Bears hockey

Rookie of the Year (male):
Jason Fransoo

Rookie of the year (female):
tie—Alana Cabana and Lindsay Bergevin

RC: We split this category into two this year because we simply could not decide between these three amazing first-years. Bergevin, though she won a bronze medal in high jump at nationals, is on the list because of one amazing leap—she shattered a 28-year-old U of A record in January by clearing 1.81m at the Golden Bear Open in January.

Pandas hockey forward Cabana was plus-27 in conference play, with 15 goals and 18 assists. She was second in Canada West for points, and tied in fourth for both goals and assists.

Fransoo didn't get the Canada West prize either, losing to teammate Eric Hunter, but he was a huge asset to his team this year. Fransoo was the second-highest-scoring defender in Canada West, but it's his huge number of assist that put him on our list—he helped out on 22 Alberta goals.

Honourable mentions: Hugh O'Neill, Mike Asselstine (wrestling), Marielle TerHart (wrestling), Eric Hunter (Bears hockey)

Most underrated athlete:
Jason Fransoo

NF: Lost in a sea of talented players on the Bears' roster, Jason Fransoo played an integral, albeit underappreciated, role on Alberta's blueline. Fransoo's plus-24 rating—which lead the team—is enough of an indication of his presence on the ice.

RC: Even we hadn't realized how great Fransoo has been for the Bears until we took a closer look at the numbers—and trust us, we pay attention. Because his most significant impact on the team has been in a supporting role—he's in the top five in assists in Canada West—it was easy to overlook.

Honourable mentions: Erin Mason (field hockey) and Neb Aleksic (Bears basketball)

Most overrated:
Quade Armstrong

RC: Don't get us wrong—we know that Armstrong was doing the best he could as the Bears' starting quarterback this year. The problem is that his play didn't really merit being the Bears' starting quarterback. There's definite room for improvement in his game.

MP: I think Quade Armstrong was a victim of unrealistic expectations



LEFT: ALEX STEELE
BOTTOM: ALANA CABANA

athleticism—it's only too bad that he didn't develop into the player he was this season earlier on in his time as a Bear.

Honourable mention: Richard Bates (Bears basketball), Dana Vinge (Pandas hockey)

Most improved teams:
Bears and Pandas swimming

MP: Both swim teams were ranked in the CIS top ten for much of the season, and they both claimed bronze medals at the Canada West championships. At nationals, both teams improved even more, as the Bears jumped from eighth last year to sixth this year and the Pandas moved all the way up from eleventh to sixth. UBC and Calgary better take notice—Alberta swimming is on the way up.

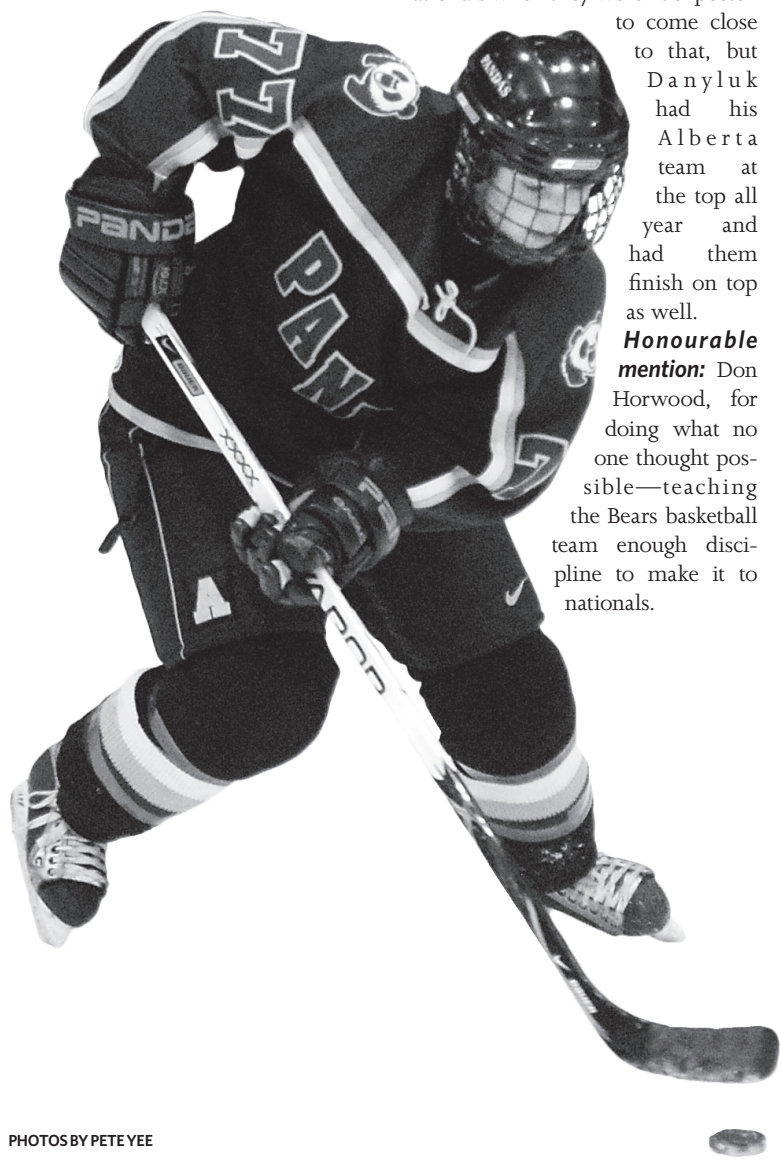
Honourable mention: Pandas wrestling

Holy shit moment (astonishing in a good way):
Paula Findlay's three national championship appearances

PY: How does your body take that much training and competition and not fall apart? Paula Findlay is the poster child of the dedicated athlete. She was able to make it to three separate national championships in cross country, swimming, and track.

WTF? moment (astonishing in a bad way):
Pandas volleyball lose to UBC at nationals

MP: The first-ranked Pandas volleyball team was up 2–0 on UBC in the national semifinal, but UBC came back and tied the match at two sets each. In the deciding fifth set, Alberta quickly got out to a 6–1 lead, and I thought they had it won. But then they proceeded to give up a 14–1 run to lose the set 15–7 and the match 3–2. Watching the webcast, I nearly put a fist through my computer monitor. I couldn't believe it—that had to be the worst finish to a game, by any team, all year.



PHOTOS BY PETE YEE