

Pandas indeed drop two

by Peter Best

Last Tuesday *Gateway's* headline on the Pandas' basketball games read "Pandas Drop Two". I'm sure that came as something of a shock to the girls, since they had in fact split their two games with Victoria.

But this week I can safely say that Pandas did indeed drop two, 63-36 and 51-35 to the University of British Columbia Thunderettes. I can't say that they didn't play well, though, because they did. UBC just played better.

It was simply a case of the better team winning. Thunderettes are defending Canadian champions. They have

a slight advantage in height over U of A and they have Liz Silcott, their captain, who has played on the national team. In the end they proved to be too tough for Alberta.

On Friday night Pandas started strongly, keeping stride with UBC by containing them with a zone defense. The zone forced Thunderettes to take outside shots and for the first half their shooting was off.

But Pandas weren't scoring much themselves as UBC was applying a tough full court press that prevented fast breaks. To add to their troubles, Pandas were missing some good opportunities on layups and short jump shots.

Probably the biggest reason for Alberta's loss was their inability to control the backboards. "None," was coach Kathy Broderick's description of her team's rebounding. For the record, Thunderettes out-rebounded the Pandas 54-25.

Led by Silcott, UBC gradually asserted itself as the first half wore on. With their captain scoring points, making steals on defense and feeding passes to her teammates, Thunderettes took a 25-18 lead at the half.

In the last twenty minutes UBC tightened up its press, forcing more turnovers by U of A. As Pandas tired Thunderettes stepped up the pace and were pulling away as the game ended.

Silcott finished with 18 points for UBC, followed by Nora Ballantyne with 13 and Carol Turney with 10.

Alberta's top scorer was Yvonne Shea, who counted 12 points, mostly on good drives to the basket.

Saturday night Pandas came out playing more aggressively

by Peter Best

It was getting late on Saturday afternoon and as I recalled the Golden Bears' 67-65 escape from the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds the previous night, I felt the tension building up.

Would there be another pressure-cooker game tonight? Or would one of the teams score a clear-cut win?

Thinking again about Friday's game, I realize now there was nothing to worry about on Saturday.

than on Friday. They worked harder on defense with their 1-2-2 zone and tried to run a fast break at every opportunity.

Most important, they improved their work under the backboards enough to pull down 35 rebounds, the same number as UBC had. Amanda Holloway and Chris Graves were the game's leading rebounders with 13 and 9 respectively.

Pandas jumped out to a quick lead and held it through the first half. They were hurt when Glenda Leach suffered an ankle injury at the 12:15 mark but the score was 22-21 for Alberta at halftime, thanks to a shot by Amanda Holloway that fell in as the buzzer sounded.

In the second half U of A took up where they left off, playing their zone defense and running as much as possible on offense.

But UBC's Kathy Burdett finally solved their scoring problems as she began hitting on shots from outside Pandas' zone, and Thunderettes slowly took control of the game.

BC's press started to take its toll again and Pandas began missing easy shots as they had on Friday. Finally U of A lost their poise and UBC went on to their second win of the weekend, outscoring Pandas 24-6 in the last 15 minutes of play.

True, the score had been close the night before, but Bears hadn't played as well as they can. And UBC had had probably its best game of the season.

But the T'birds are too inexperienced to be able to handle U of A. They only have two veterans, Darryl Gjernes and Bob Dickson - the rest of them are rookies.

Not that some of their first-year players don't have potential, mind you. Ralph Turner scored 24 points Friday. And Blake Iverson, another rookie, added 16.

But 6'11" Mike McKay has a long way to go before being able to keep up with centres like U of A's Mike Frisby and Dave Holland. He has to learn how to use his size, how to time his rebounding, how to get downfloor quickly. He's young though, just 18, and with Peter Mullins coaching him he could develop into a tough basketball player.

UBC's inexperience showed in the way they tried to apply their press on Friday night. They weren't covering tightly enough, allowing U of A's guards to break through the press with controlled dribbling, or to pass over it to the open forwards.

On the other hand, while Bears had played well enough to win on Friday, there was room for improvement. They had been hurt by getting foul trouble with five players collecting four fouls each. Their shooting wasn't as sharp as it can be and they had some defensive lapses as well.

Nonetheless they had come through when they had to. In the first half UBC had taken a nine point lead before Bears started to come back. They stayed calm and ground down T'birds' lead until it was 36-33 at halftime.

U of A carried their come-back over into the second

half, tying the score and then taking the lead with 9:08 left to play. As time ran out Alberta slowed the game down to a pace that kept UBC from scoring enough to catch up.

UBC had a final chance to tie the game in the last six seconds when they threw the ball up near Bears' basket in the hope that McKay would get the rebound and score. But the big centreman wasn't able to gain possession and put the ball in until after the buzzer had sounded, and Bears had their 67-65 win.

Steve Ignatavicius had scored 16 points to lead U of A's offense, and Wallace Tollestrup added 12.

Len Davidiuk also had a strong game for U of A. He ignored McKay's five-inch height advantage and outthrust him to collect eight rebounds.

On Saturday, UBC started out pressing again and doing a better job of it, forcing Bears to throw some bad passes.

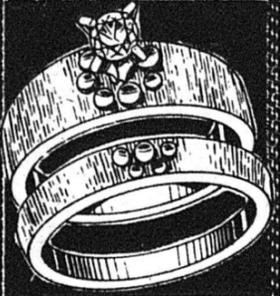
But Alberta was playing some good defense themselves and making more of their shots (55%, compared to 41% Friday). In the last five minutes of the first half they outscored the T'birds 14-8 to take a 42-39 lead at the half.

In the second half they slowly took control, increasing their margin as the game wore on. Holding a comfortable 72-60 lead with three minutes to play, Bears went into a stall until Tollestrup found himself open along the baseline and drove in for a layup to put the game away.

"Doctor 'WW, as Tollestrup is sometimes known, finished as the game's top scorer with 24 points. Ignatavicius scored 18 for U of A and Frisby had 13.

Turner and Iverson again led UBC's offense, scoring 18 and 17 points respectively.

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