

Hanneman leads Panda gymnasts to Canada West title

by Mark Spector

Led by an outstanding performance by Michele Hanneman, the Alberta Pandas gymnastics team won their second consecutive Canada West championship in Calgary over the weekend.

The Pandas actually placed second in the four team meet, just 0.35 behind the University of Manitoba's score of 132.85. But because Manitoba is not a member of Canada West conference, Alberta collected their tenth crown in the last 14 years. The Calgary Dinnies finished third, just 0.25 ahead of UBC's 129.65.

But the story of this meet was Hanneman, whose 35.60 overall performance earned her the top All Around score of the meet. She placed first in the vault (9.25), the uneven bars (8.90), and the balance beam (9.05), while collecting third place in the floor exercise with a score of 8.40.

Hanneman's overall score set a new school record for the U of A, eclipsing the old mark by 0.4 points which was held by the Panda's roo-

kie coach, Heidi Ross.

"I knew that she was capable of doing that," explained Ross, "it was just a matter of waiting for it to happen." The 18 year old is only in her first year at the U of A, and honed her skills at the Capital City Gym Club while attending Louis St. Laurent high school.

"I think it surprised a few people," admitted Ross of her star's performance. "She's pretty modest but confident in her own way. When you're competing you just focus on your routines, you don't think of the pressure."

As for her team's placing, Ross was not really surprised. "I knew that we had the talent to do it, but the other teams have also improved a lot. The four of us have had mixed finishes in our meets this year."

After losing the top four gymnasts off of last year's squad, you'd think that there would be some kind of rebuilding period. This team has already built character though, and is capable of a top spot at the upcoming nationals.

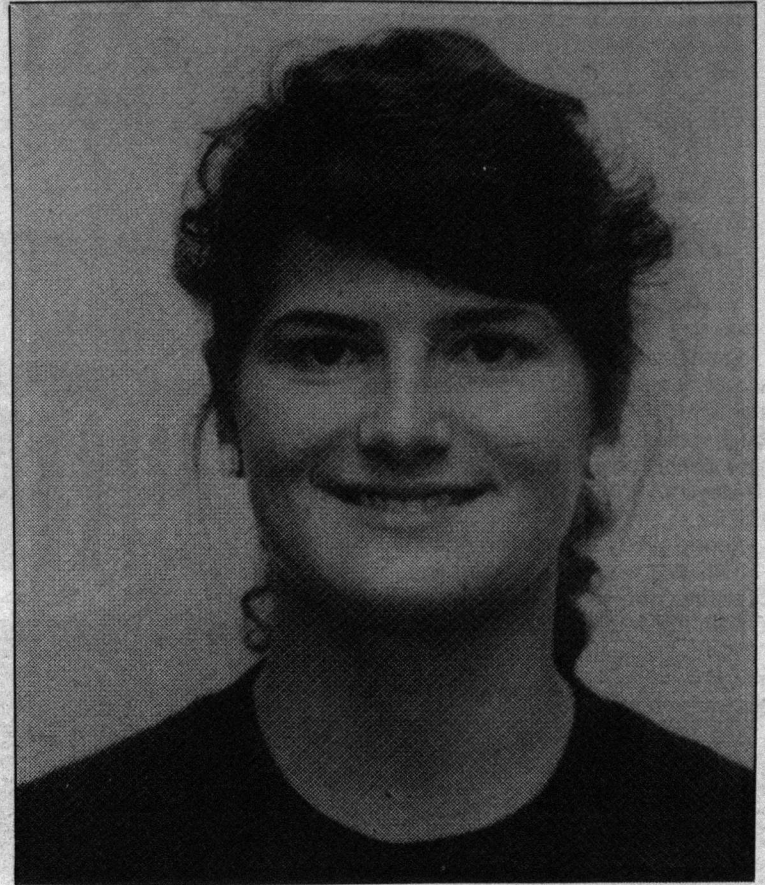
"It was a strange meet because

none of the teams had an excellent weekend," said Ross. "They had all had one or two bad events. We had to do the beam last, and I thought 'Oh God' because it hasn't been our best area this year."

"But everyone pulled it together on the beam. It showed a lot of character," she stated. After Hanneman's first place beam finish came Diane Patterson in second (8.95), Monica Kmech in fourth (8.75), and Michelle Graham placing ninth with a 8.35.

Patterson had an excellent meet as well, earning fifth spot overall with a score of 33.50. She had a third on the floor (8.40) and a fifth on the bars (8.15). Lisa Jefferies ended up in 11th spot (31.95), Donna Spanner 19th (28.25), Kmech 20th (24.25), Graham 22nd, and Karen Garret 27th.

Alberta will take six gymnasts to McMaster University in Hamilton in two weeks time for the CIAU's, and Ross states that with a good performance her team has an excellent chance at a national title.



Pandas gymnastics coach Heidi Ross

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