

Alberta defenseless against Saskatchewan

by David Donnelly

The University of Saskatchewan Huskies and Huskiettes visited the U of A last Friday and Saturday to play two matches with Bears and Pandas volleyball teams.

The Huskies are presently ranked #1 in Canada while the Huskiettes are ranked #4.

While neither the Bears or the Pandas are ranked in the top 10 in the nation, both of our squads put up fine performances and maintained that their opposition would have to sweat a bit if they planned on beating the U of A.

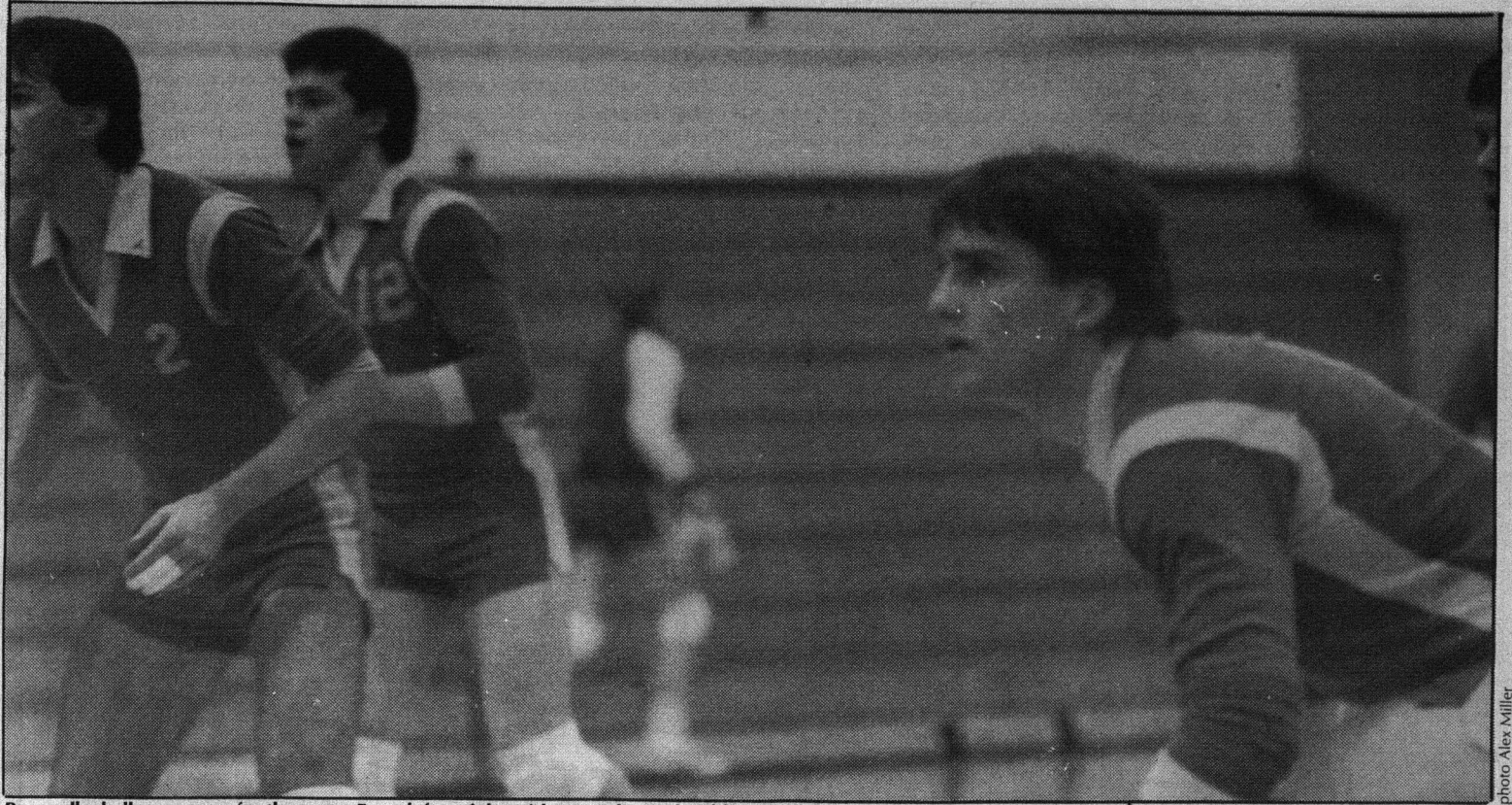
The Bears had beaten the Huskies one game at a pre-season tourney in Manitoba, and coach Jean-Claude Meilleur wanted to win at least one game of the best-of-five matches each night.

Alberta used a "closed block" and "pinched" defense to guard against the Huskies greater height and powerful hitters. The Saskatchewan team frequently hits down the middle so the closed block defense brings the Bears' blockers closer to center. When blocking Alberta pinched, playing closer to the net.

"We change our defense against various teams but we'll continue to use our quick attack style offense," said Meilleur. Meilleur plans to perfect this offense by the season's end.

Unfortunately, the Bears' chances were reduced Friday with two of their starting six out of action. They went down 15-1, 15-12, and 15-5.

Saturday afternoon also saw the Bears go down three straight. The scores remained close during the first and third games with Saskat-



Bear volleyballers prepare for the serve. From left to right, Dirk Kuerscher, John Elden, and John MacKinnon protect against number one Saskatchewan Huskies.

chewan finally breaking away 15-9 and 15-10. The second game saw the Bears fail to capitalize offensively on numerous short serves, and Alberta's rallying attack was more dominating than the 15-7 score seems to indicate.

The Bears opened the second game with John MacKinnon spiking a soon-to-be-patented "leather lunch." MacKinnon's hitting game was a dominant factor in all three games and was responsible for at least half of the Bears' points in game 3.

The Pandas also played admirably against the 4th seeded Huskiettes. Their offensive production continues to improve even as the young team fell back 15-2 and 15-5 in the first two games Friday.

The third game saw the Pandas blow their only good chance of the match. Captain Brenda Kadatz took the service as the Pandas trailed 12-7 and ran the score to 13-12 over the Huskiettes. The teams exchanged serves frequently, and the Huskiettes barely scraped past the Pandas 15-13.

Saturday afternoon the Pandas did not get the offensive breaks they had earned the night before, and went down 15-1, 15-5, and 15-3. Several questionable officials' calls frustrated the Pandas' offense, who's improving play frequently troubled the Huskiettes.

The next home action is Dec. 6th and 7th when the Bears and Pandas host the North-Am Tournament which will be attended by a mixture of club-teams, school teams, and the Alberta Provincial squad. Next weekend both teams travel

to the University of Lethbridge on Friday and the U of Calgary on Saturday for a pair of road matches.

Bear and Panda Facts . . . Doug Anton missed Friday's and part of Saturday's action with the flu. . . **Steve Khan** also played infrequently as he rested a bad right shoulder. . . **Greg Kozak** left Saturday's third game with a twisted ankle. . . **Kathy Simpkins** sat out the remainder of the first game Friday after taking a good bonk on the snoz trying to block a spike. She returned to play later on.

They are staying away at the U of A

by Tim Enger

So, did you go to the Bears Basketball game last weekend?

This question, when asked in the Arts building, will get the guys laughing so hard their earrings might fall off. Then again there are those who will flatter the question with an excuse. "I was busy," "I had better things to do," "I had a disease," "Half my family died," "My brother is pregnant," etc. . . .

Well, those seem like valid excuses, but for the rest of you, what's the problem? Why doesn't the average student at the University of Alberta want to attend on-campus sporting events?

Since there is no such thing as an "average" student, I set out to the extremes to find an answer. After many hours of surveying Engineers and Arts students, I came up with six major reasons as to why nobody goes to the games. Here they are: 1 "I never know when they play" — Get serious, what do you need, the schedules tattooed onto your arms! The Athletic department puts out several, albeit small, posters for every home game of every sport. Thursday's Gateway usually carries a schedule of the upcoming weekends sporting events. Even the Journal and a few radio stations get into the act. Of all the complaints I heard this was the most common and the one with the least credibility. If you really want to go to a

when it occurs.

2 "The facilities are a joke" — Here they may have a point. The gym and rink look like renovated warehouses and the football field is simply that. . . a field. The biggest problem at the football games is the public address system. If you can hear it, it might remind you of the Wainwright bus depot. This doesn't help the volunteer announcers, some of who are so bad they make you wonder why they don't have Speaking Competency

Tests. But, even a golden-throated FM DJ would sound like he is doing fish calls from the bottom of an aquarium on this sound system.

The biggest complaint I heard was "They have the Butterdome, why don't they use it?" Well, I've got news for you, they have and it was quite embarrassing. In 1983, 12,000 wildly enthusiastic fans packed the Pavillion for the finals of the Universiade basketball tournament. This got the Athletic department thinking that fan support for amateur basketball was alive and well in Edmonton and they would hold the Bears home games in the Pavillion. Right. . . They might as well of held the games in the Grand Canyon for the small amount of people they got. Also, during the same year the football team played their games in Commonwealth Stadium and got the same results — a bigger place to make the crowds look even smaller.

So, as you can see, the facilities don't really make a difference. Think about it, if the University came equipped with a Rose Bowl and a Coliseum, would that make you want to go to the games? I didn't think so.

3 "It's just a bunch of dumb jocks" — Contrary to popular opinion you still have to attend and pass University courses to be able to play intercollegiate sports. Yes, we're talking about real courses, not Basketweaving 202 and Underwater Photography 311. Courses that will lead to the completion of a degree.

Each player must have earned 18 credits or a high school diploma in his or her previous year in order to be eligible to play the following year, so that one doesn't hold any water either.

4 "The American game is better" — Hell yes it is! With the amount of money the U.S. Colleges pour out into scholarships it better be. But that's not the point.

The point is that no matter what the skill level is those crazy Yankees will go to the college games simply because they want to. Supporting intercollegiate sports has been part of their culture ever since the underdog Colonists beat the heavily favored British with time running out in the American Revolution.

Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case in Canada. Third year engineer Hugh Smith gave a very insightful reason why. "I didn't go to games in Junior High. When I got to High School I didn't go to the games because I never went in Junior High. At University, I don't go because I've never gone to any school sports before, so why go now?" It's just not part of our culture. We haven't grown up with it.

Another reason why the Americans pack the stadiums is that, in most cases college sport is the only game in town. Not too many pro teams come out of Tallahassee, Florida, Norman, Oklahoma, or Ann Arbor, Michigan. Edmonton has three pro teams. This is not to say that you can't see both, but if you had the chance to see the Oilers vs. Flyers, or the Bears vs. Pronghorns (Quick Quiz: where are the Pronghorns from?) which would you pick. This goes to prove that people in this town, for whatever reason live for pro sports, and sadly, there is very little the Athletic dept. can do about it.

5 "The games aren't exciting" — This was another common answer and they almost had me convinced until I realized who I was talking to. These are people who go to Oiler games, the most exciting team in the NHL, and sit on their hands. I don't think that people who live in this area know what is exciting in sports.

It has been said that if the Oilers played out of Chicago they would have near riots at every home game.

The same can be said about University sports. If the winning tradition of Golden Bears athletics were stationed at Texas Tech, the only way to get season tickets would be if they were willed to you after your parents died.

I mean what do the people want! The football and hockey teams have consistent winning records every year. The basketball team is the defending CWUAA (Quick Quiz #2: What do those initials stand for?) champs. The wrestling team (Canada West champs) is always nationally ranked, and the women's gymnastic and track teams are the defending national champs!

How would you like to go to Bishops University where the last team to come close to any kind of a national championship was the "Reach For The Top" team (they still get more fans at football games than we do).

I found it strange that most of the people who were telling me that the games are not exciting were those who said that they have never gone to a game. Since they seem to be basing their opinions on hearsay, the only thing the Athletic department can say to change their mind is "Try it, you might like it." Then tell us its not exciting.

6 "I have no time" or "I've got better things to do" — For the Engineers, I can see their point. With their workload they can only afford to go out one night of the weekend and most of them don't want to "waste" it on a basketball or hockey game. But, hey guys, most of these games are over by 10:00, and as most of the civilized world knows no party gets rolling until 10:30. What better way to fill the gap between dinner and the party then to go to a game? And let's face it. Athletics dreams of having problems with alcohol at games. Get it guys?

For the rest of the people it is simply a matter of them not caring

about the program. To some of them, staying home and watching "The Love Boat" is their idea of something better to do. Third year Arts student Joan Fitzpatrick says it best: "I have absolutely no desire, nor have I ever had any desire, to watch a basketball or hockey game."

Look if you definitely do not want to go to the game then don't go, its that simple. But don't put down the Athletic department. Bob Steadward and his associates have bent over backwards to try and put fans in the stands. Special events like "Cheer For Beer" and "San Diego Chicken Night" have been somewhat successful but are beginning to lose novelty. The sad fact is that they could bring a whole barn yard full of chickens in and you people would only come once, not to watch the game, but to see the sideline entertainment.

Maybe they should give up on you. Maybe they should concentrate on getting the general public to the games and forget about you. But they won't.

Call him a masochist but Dr. Steadward believes that university sports are played for the benefit of the students and the alumni of the University of Alberta first. If the student and alumni thought the same way there would be no problem.

So what's the answer? Would you come if they sold beer at the games? Would you come if they had a human sacrifice between periods? Would you come if they paid you? There is no easy answer, but the simple fact remains that until the student body as a whole feels like supporting its athletic teams, they're not going to come. I don't know what Dr. Steadward is going to do to try and fix this, but I do know one thing — that is what he's being paid to try and do.