

Young hoop Pandas looking to improve

by Alan Small

Last year's edition of the Panda basketball team was the worst this university has seen since 1973. They were 10-25 overall and 4-16 in Canada West competition.

Panda head coach Diane Hilko has shaken up the lineup for the 1987-88 year. Only four players remain from last year's squad. Leading those four is third year point guard Patti Smith.

Smith scored 8.9 points-per-game last season. Also the team's assist leader Smith will be shoot-

ing more this year.

"Her job will be to keep the intensity up on the court," said head coach Diane Hilko, who is in her third year as Panda coach, "having been starting point guard for two years will help the team relax. We panicked too much last year."

The other returning guard is Tania Sosniuk, who saw little playing time as a freshman last season. "She's developed a good outside shot over the summer," said Hilko, "last year she really passed well into the post."

Another of last year's rookies. Joanna Ross, is expected to do most of the work underneath the basket this year. Ross at 6'1" has the size to go up against Canada West's biggest players. Although she struggled at times last year, Hilko is expecting her second trip through the league to be more successful.

"She's an entirely different player from last year," said Hilko, "she had to play a lot last year as a rookie. She could dominate on the boards this year."

The final returnee is forward Marg Uytdewilligen who cracked the starting lineup last year and will be expected to provide leadership and experience.

Of the eight new Pandas, three of them have some experience with the university game. Forward Celeste Bazinet comes from Medi-

"We have a talented club. We just can't let anything get to us." — Hilko



Panda forward Tracy Cook (r) goes for the ball with alumni and present assistant coach Linda Mrkonjic. Cook is one of eight newcomers to the Panda basketball roster. They play in Calgary this weekend.

cine Hat College but did not play last year.

"She really missed the game last year," said Hilko, "she's a leader by example."

Lorna Stielow, a transfer guard from Red Deer College is expected to get some time coming off the bench as the sixth player in the Pandas scheme. Teresa Diachuk redshirted with the Pandas last year, and although she has a knee injury at the moment, Hilko plans to turn her into a starter at either the guard or forward position.

"She has a quiet personality off the court, but she's fiery on the court. She doesn't hold anything back," said Hilko.

Other newcomers are: Lesley Lacroix, who'll play forward, Marianne Edwards, a guard from Ross Sheppard, Trish Hague, a 5'11" guard who played with the provincial team this summer, Tracy Cook, a forward out of Lundbreck, Alberta, and Corey



To make the playoffs, the Pandas must reach higher than last season.

Ennis, a post from Medicine Hat.

Despite the new blood, the Pandas will still be hard pressed to make the playoffs in Canada West this year.

"We have a talented club," said Hilko, "we just can't let anything get to us."

Three of the six teams in Canada West were in the CIAU top ten. The Pandas ran into that last

year, and always had problems against the two toughest teams, Calgary and Victoria. In the eight conference games against those clubs, the Pandas were outscored 591-354. In Canada West overall competition, they were outscored by 13 points per game. Hilko is hoping the new blood on the Pandas will close up the gap this season.

The Pandas will find out how they shape up this weekend when they travel to Calgary for their annual tournament. Besides the hosts and Alberta, Lethbridge, Regina, Manitoba, and Winnipeg will participate.



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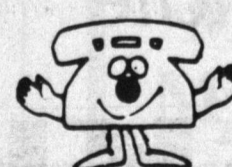
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