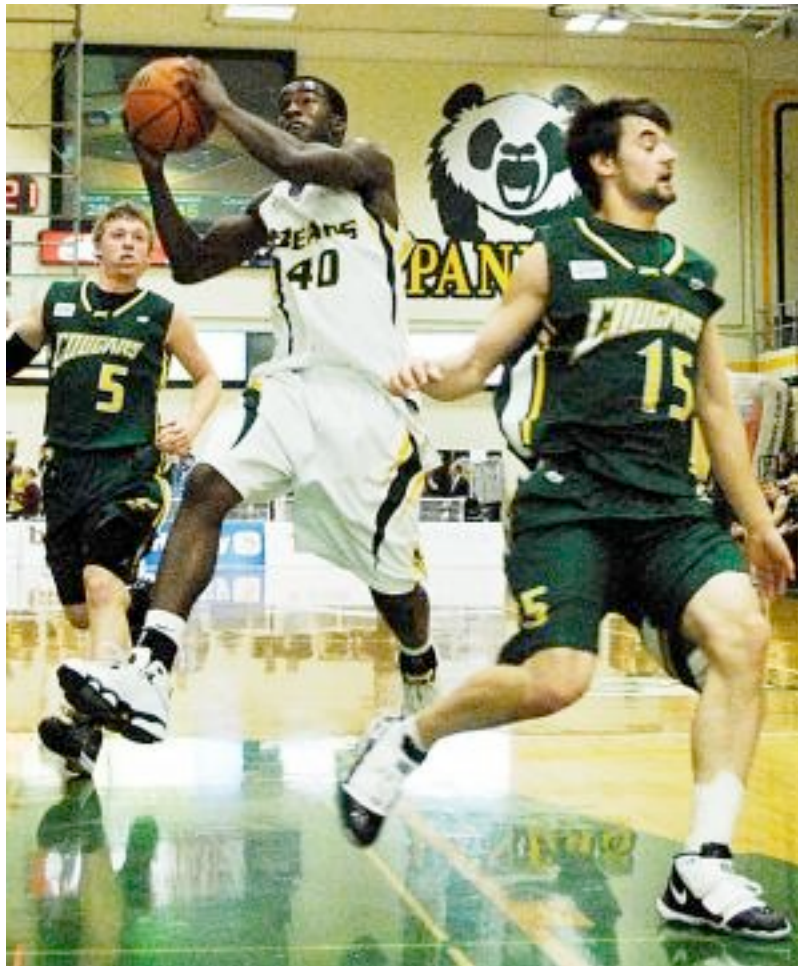


# Basket-Bears looking to escape standings log jam against pair of B.C. opponents

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**SAHR SOARS** Sahr Saffa will be one of the Bears called upon for extra offence.

The Golden Bears hoops squad will open up the second half of Canada West play this weekend when the Simon Fraser Clan (6-1) and the Trinity Western Spartans (4-3) each pay a rare visit to the Main Gym.

At 5–5, the Bears are in a five-way tie for second place in the Prairie Division, but head coach Greg Francis is impressed with the way his team has worked in practice following the Christmas break.

“The guys look fresh and I think they'll come out with upbeat energy this weekend, and if they do that I don't see why we can't get the results we want.”

“Before the break, the assistant coaches put together a workout program together for the guys and it appears they have all strengthened themselves,” Francis noted.

The matchups with the two west-coast squads will present the Bears with two distinct challenges defensively. SFU generates the majority of its offence from the perimeter, and lead Canada West in three-point scoring.

Sean Burke and Kevin Shaw form one of the most dominant backcourts in CIS, and halting their strong ability to score will be a major key for the Bears defence versus the Clan.

“Simon Fraser finds ways to get hot from the perimeter every game and they generate so many open shots via screens, which is something we need to be ready for,” Francis said. “We are as tough as anybody on the defensive side, so if we can do a solid job of defending the three, we can really make it tough for them.”

The Clan are also third in the nation and tops in the conference, shooting a staggering 75 per cent from the charity stripe; therefore, it's clear that the Bears need to stay out of foul trouble.

Unlike SFU, TWU relies on their forwards to provide the majority of their offensive opportunities, and they are led by fourth-year business student Jacob Doerksen. He's the third leading scorer in Canada West averaging 21.3 PPG and is also a terrific rebounder.

“Trinity Western wants to pound the ball inside and I know we can compete and play defense against the big sets they present. In Saturday’s game especially, we’re going to need be hungrier on the glass and grabbing rebounds,” Francis explained.

The Bears' defensive play has carried them to a .500 record to this point in the season, but they need their offence — ranked only ahead of the winless Winnipeg Wesmen — to step up as the season winds down and the games carry more weight.

“A win against SFU can really give us some good momentum. I want the guys to come out with intensity and put their best game forward on Friday night, so as to avoid another Jekyll and Hyde situation like we had versus Saskatchewan at the end of November,” Francis remarked.

The Bears will hit the hardwood Friday night against Simon Fraser and Saturday night versus Trinity Western with tip-off scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. both nights.