

Basketball Pandas swept by Cougars

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It was a forgettable weekend for the previously ninth-ranked hardwood Pandas as they concluded their two-game home set with the third-ranked Regina Cougars by blowing a 19-point lead on Saturday night, losing 80–68. While they also lost Friday night by a 68–64 score, Saturday's loss will be especially tough to swallow.

After building up what appeared to be an insurmountable first-half lead, the Pandas fell apart on the offensive and defensive fronts and were outscored 45–19 in the second half.

“The girls quit on themselves and didn't play hard enough defensively. They didn't choose to compete and battle with Regina. The Cougars just wanted the game more than we did apparently,” head coach Scott Edwards said.

Edwards' squad had no answer for Regina power forward Brittany Read. The third-year kinesiology student was dominant in the low-post both nights, racking up 40 total points, including 20 in the second half on Saturday alone.

“Brittany is a key player for us. We needed her [to] dominate inside because that's an advantage we have over Alberta is in the post,” Cougars head coach Dave Taylor noted.

Despite making over half of their attempted shots in the first half of Saturday's contest, including going 5-for-10 from downtown, the Pandas shot an abysmal 22.6 per cent from the floor in the second half of Saturday's contest. They also made it to the charity stripe 13 fewer times in the second half than in the first half.

“The bottom line is that the girls have to hit shots. We had 30 shots in the second half and you cannot win ball games when you only make seven,” Edwards explained.

When the Pandas moved the ball around the court in both games, they gave themselves plenty of open shots, easy lay-ups, and attacked the rim with ferocity. Yet when shots were not finding the bottom of the net, the Pandas become frustrated and started forcing shots.

Guards Marisa Haylett and Nicole Clarke led the Pandas in scoring against the Cougars, netting 25 and 26 points respectively on the weekend. Clarke and Haylett also, however, struggled with turnovers.

“Everyone wants to be more aggressive and generate that extra attack for the team, but right now it is counter-intuitive for us,” Edwards said. “This is a young team and when things go bad, they think they individually have to fix it.”

In addition to Saturday’s second half collapse, the opening quarter of Friday night’s contest was frustrating for the Pandas — Regina outscored Alberta 26–15.

“We had three bad quarters and ultimately lost two ball games. We have to come back stronger next weekend versus Saskatchewan,” Edwards asserted.

With consecutive losses to Regina, the Pandas dropped to 5–3 and out of first place in Canada West’s Prairie Division. It will not get any easier for the Pandas as they welcome the fourth-ranked Saskatchewan Huskies to the Main Gym next weekend to close out the first half of the regular season.