

# CIS women's volleyball nationals: early Alberta struggles help Manitoba advance to championship final

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A spirited stand by the host Alberta Pandas was not enough to overcome their horrible first set performance, as the Pandas dropped their semifinal match to Canada West rival Manitoba 3-1.

It was a remarkable accomplishment for the Pandas to force a fourth set, let alone come within one point of pushing the match to a fifth and deciding set.

The first set — an absolute trouncing (25-6) — saw the Pandas commit a multitude of mistakes on the attacking front and with their passing game. They

only notched five kills compared to eight attack errors and could not find holes in the Bisons' defensive walls.

Manitoba capitalized on Alberta's mistakes, finishing the set with a whopping attack efficiency of 59.1 per cent, four blocks, and putting a clamp on the exuberance of the hometown crowd.

Nevertheless, the Pandas did not give up — not with the dream of winning the National Championship on their home floor still alive.

“The third and fourth sets showed the fight that our team has and we did not give in to any obstacles that we were faced with,” Alberta head coach Laurie Eisler said.

After trailing 8–5 early in the third set, the Pandas displayed the same hunger and energy they had in Friday's upset of second-ranked Montreal as they went on up 20–13 and eventually closed it out. The Pandas also gave the crowd a reason to get raucous with seven blocks in the third set.

“Once we started hitting our targets and got more aggressive with our serve, it made their offense more predictable and we could get two blockers out against them,” Eisler noted.

Despite trailing for most of the fourth set, the drive for set number five was alive when the Pandas took their first lead of the set at 24–23. However, Manitoba showed their resiliency in winning four of the next five points to win the set and advance to Sunday evening's championship match against top-ranked UBC.

When asked how she felt about getting her team prepared and in the right frame of mind for the Bronze Medal Match with the Laval Rouge et Or, Eisler hesitantly responded, “Right now, I do not feel good about anything, but I might feel a little better tomorrow.”