

Pandas salvage weekend basketball split with dismantling of Spartans

JANUARY 12, 2010 - 12:04AM

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The Pandas basketball team opened the second half of the season with a 76–65 defeat at the hands of the top-ranked and undefeated Simon Fraser Clan on Friday night, but followed it up with a dominating 81–60 victory over the Trinity Western Spartans on Saturday.

Friday's tussle with SFU was quite close considering the Clan entered the contest having won 46 consecutive games and their average margin of victory in

Canada West play this season sat at 30.8 points. In addition, the Pandas had to play without the services of their second-leading scorer Nicole Clarke.

Clarke, who was the 2009 Canada West Rookie of the Year, has a fractured bone on the outside of her left foot, and is expected to be sidelined for the next 4–6 weeks.

“We hope to have Nicole back by the playoffs, but in the meantime, everyone has to step up their game. Obviously, it is a huge loss for us because she averages 32 minutes and 14 points per game for us,” Pandas head coach Scott Edwards noted.

Despite the absence of Clarke, the Pandas put forth a gritty defensive effort against the Clan in holding them well below their average point total.

The Pandas solid defensive play carried over into Saturday’s game against the Spartans, with the lone exception being a 19-point first half performance by fifth-year TWU forward Lauren Doubroff.

“At halftime, we definitely challenged our kids to limit the amount of ways [Doubroff] could touch the ball in the second half, and I think our players just outworked her and beat her to all the spots on the court,” Edwards said.

Doubroff only scored three points in the second half — one that was completely dominated by the Pandas. Alberta forced numerous turnovers, while their quick ball movement generated easy shots and gave them numerous trips to the free-throw line. The Green and Gold coupled that offensive showing with stifling defence to cruise to the victory.

The Pandas outscored TWU 42–22 in the second half to secure the win.

Marisa Haylett scored 21 points against the Spartans to go along with her 24 points against SFU, including a perfect 11-of-11 from the charity stripe. Georgia

Popovici also chipped in 14 points for the Pandas off the bench against the Spartans.

“I think our kids showed a little pride in the second half versus Trinity and they did not want to lose two games in a row at home. They came out and played with intensity defensively, rebounding, and fought hard for loose balls,” Edwards explained.

The next game action for the Pandas will take place next weekend when Edwards takes his team down the QE2 for a pair of pivotal games against the Calgary Dinos. The Dinos sit only a half-game behind the Pandas for third in the Prairie Division.

“If you are going to split, you want to make sure you win the Saturday game. The girls should have more confidence ahead of our matchup with our biggest rival,” Edwards stated.