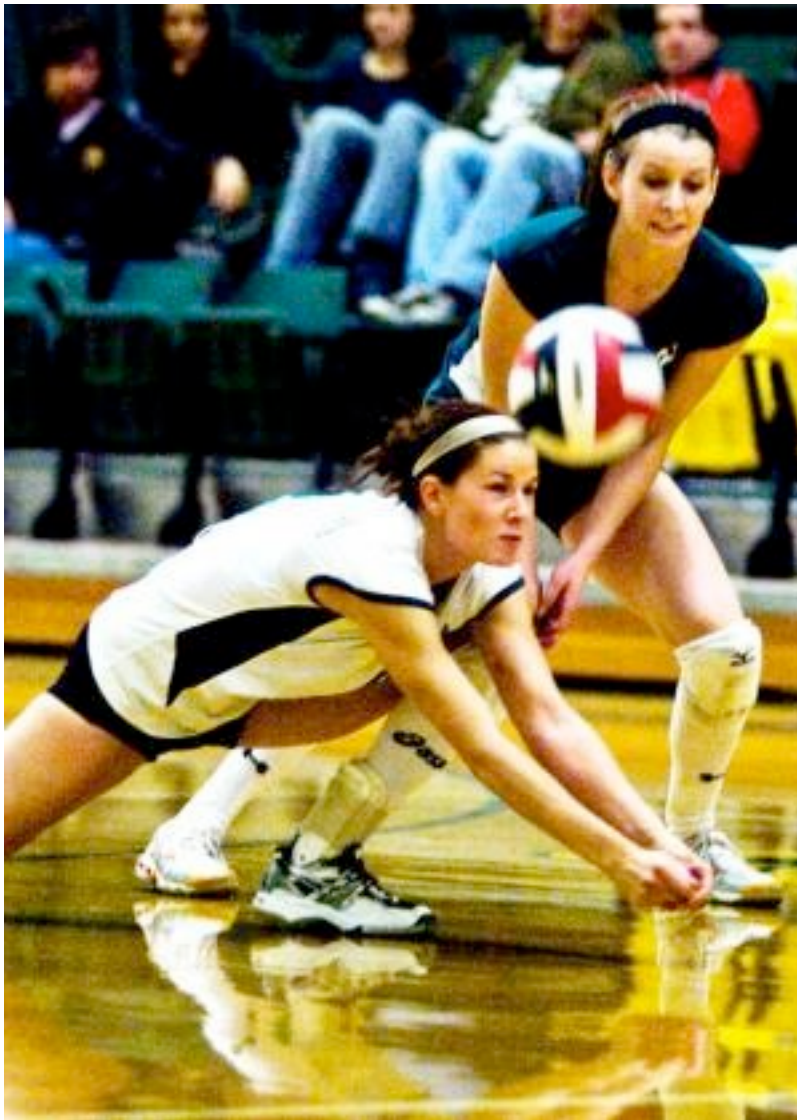


Pandas welcome WolfPack to town after two victories over the Dinos last weekend

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AHEAD OF THE PACK The Pandas welcome last season's CW silver-medalists, the Thompson River WolfPack, to the Main Gym this weekend for a pair of matches.

The fifth-ranked Pandas volleyball squad got off to a promising start in Canada West play this past weekend with a pair of wins over the fourth ranked Dinos from Calgary.

Both matches were extremely tight. The Pandas captured Friday's match in four sets; Saturday's match was even more intense and included plenty of back-and-forth momentum swings, but the hometown team succeeded in subduing a pesky Dinos team in a five-set thriller.

"I don't know if you could have scripted it any better," Pandas head coach Laurie Eisler said. "It was really challenging Friday night because it was the home opener and our activation levels were super high."

The Pandas used two solid defensive efforts to stifle the Dinos' powerful attacks, which was led by Maura Hayes — a freshman from Cupids, Newfoundland — who tallied 21 kills, 22 digs, and showed off her dynamite serve during the two matches.

Despite the superb weekend by Alberta's Tiffany Proudfoot, the Pandas remain a team that does not possess a "superstar." Instead, on display versus the Dinos, the Pandas showed that they're a collective group of players that will compete for loose balls and maintain a team-first attitude, and that's just fine with Eisler.

"We have been a real roller coaster team to this point, but we continued to battle and found ways to win both nights by playing relatively steady," Eisler commented. "Limiting scoring runs against us was also a big key."

The Volley-Pandas managed to open up the majority of the nine sets played with sizeable leads, only to see the Dinos continue to continually tear into them.

In addition, during both matches there was a plethora of long and difficult rallies, which helped raise the energy within the Main Gym and undoubtedly pumped up the Panda players as well.

“You don’t mind playing free balls over the net, if you think your defense has a chance to be successful. I think we’re a patient team and do not mind rallying and rallying because we’re physically fit,” noted Eisler.

Even with a 2–0 start, the Pandas have some improvements to make prior to hosting Thompson Rivers this coming weekend.

“Our offence is a work in progress and we’re not very balanced right now. The majority of our sets are going to the outside and not enough attacking is taking place from the middle of the court,” Eisler said.

The Pandas and WolfPack will square off in the Main Gym for a pair of afternoon affairs this weekend, with game time scheduled for 1 p.m. on Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday.