

# Swim team set for final tuneup before CW championships

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The Bears and Pandas swim teams will take to the pool this Saturday and Sunday for their annual Green and Gold Senior Invitational.

This weekend's event will mark the first time the U of A's swim teams have competed at home since the Kinsmen Sports Centre back in the first weekend of December. And only one week before that, the Bears and Pandas closed out November with a solid third-place finish at the University Challenge Cup at the University of Toronto.

Fourth-year head coach Bill Humby believes his squads are ready to get back into the swing of racing after an extended break from competition.

“The purpose of this weekend's meet is really for the athletes to remember what it is like to go all out, and go for speed in races because we've been doing an extensive amount of training since Christmas,” Humby explained. “There is always the worry that the athletes will lose a little of their speed and intensity, so it is all about freshening them up via competition.”

The 2010 edition of the Invitational will be different than in years past, as the Bears and Pandas will not be competing against other Canada West universities. Instead a trio of clubs — the Olympian Swim Club (Edmonton), the Silver Tide Swim Club (Sherwood Park), and the Goldfins Swim Club (Saskatoon) — will be sending a number of their best swimmers to compete against the Green and Gold.

Despite the lack of intra-conference competition that Alberta's swimmers will face this weekend, the meet will give Humby an opportunity to assess his teams and decide on who will swim in each of the three relays at the Canada West Finals in Lethbridge the following weekend.

There is a 4x100m freestyle relay, a 4x200m freestyle relay, and a 4x100m medley relay for both the men and women.

“Relays are a big part of this weekend and we will have four relays in two sessions. Plus, on any one of the relays, we have probably six or eight swimmers that are pushing toward claiming one of the four spots,” Humby noted.

Four strong Pandas, led by fifth-year captain Lauren Gillespie, are expected to excel this weekend, as well as at the conference championship, especially in the 4x200m freestyle relay. Gillespie will be joined by breaststroke specialist Kayla Voytechek — who competed at last summer’s World Student Games in Serbia — established butterfly swimmer Kristyn Flanagan, and elite freshman freestyle swimmer Bobbie Mielnichuk.

“Together, those girls are one powerful relay team. Every time they have raced our rivals from UBC this year, they have beaten them,” Humby said.

The Bears are led by their captain, Prince George native Brian Yakiwchuk. He's coming off a strong performance at the University Challenge Cup and has medalled in the 1500m Freestyle in each of the last two CIS Championships.

2008-09 U of A Rookie of the Year Josh Au and Scott Stewart are two other solid swimmers for the Bears.

“We have really good depth on both teams and I think we can be really competitive as we head toward nationals,” Humby asserted.