

# Volley-Bears ready for title defence

OCTOBER 21, 2009 - 6:57PM

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**EYE OPENER** Justin Merta (centre) and Alberta hope to take a bite out of the Dinos.

The top-ranked Alberta Golden Bears volleyball team will begin their quest for a third consecutive national title when they take the floor against their bitter provincial rivals from Calgary for a pair of weekend contests to open the Canada West season this weekend.

Coming off of four straight wins over American schools, including their Saturday evening duel with the Pac-10 Champion USC Trojans, the Bears will look to carry over their preseason momentum into conference play.

Alberta finished their exhibition schedule with an 11–0 mark and although their record may support the notion that they were untested, this wasn't the case. The Bears survived two intense five-set matches in the preseason, one of which was played against Calgary. As the champs, everyone will be gunning for the Bears in every match, including the Dinos.

“Calgary is on the verge of becoming a veteran team. They have the experience of some fifth-year players and they have good size, so they will present us with a formidable test this weekend,” head coach Terry Danyluk commented.

Canada West is a tough conference, so going out and winning every night won't be that simple for the Bears. Therefore, Danyluk is trying to spark a fire inside his players to come out hungry and ready for action this weekend.

“In men's volleyball in Canada West, there are always five or six really good teams, so it's very hard for us not to get excited. If we are not excited then we are missing the boat,” Danyluk explained.

If the Bears are going to make it back to Nationals to defend their title, they'll need to shore up their fundamentals. In addition, they have to mould some other things into place ahead of this weekend's games.

“Every guy on this team still needs to get better; we are not done improving,” Danyluk pointed out. “Some guys are switching positions back and forth and are trying to get some stability and feel comfortable in [certain] areas.”

At the Can-Am Challenge, fifth-year senior Thomas Jarmoc played outstanding en route to being named the tournament MVP, but the performance of this year's team will be based more around a team concept. Everyone will be expected to step up and contribute to a team with the highest of expectations.

“Thomas is a good player and a very good athlete, but there are a lot of guys who can carry different loads,” Danyluk noted. “We had some guys, such as Tanner Nault, come off the bench on Saturday versus USC and do really good things.”

Although the Bears are favourites to claim a third-straight national title, coach Danyluk doesn't like to talk about championships until the opportunity arises.

“In the end, you’re either good enough, or you’re not. In order to get good enough, there is a process that has to take place and that is the thing I am most concerned about.”

The Bears will take the first two steps of that process against the Dinos when play begins at 8 p.m. on Friday and at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday at the Main Gym.