

# Volley-Bears sweep pesky Bisons at home

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Bears take both contests from Manitoba to claim sole possession of top spot in CW standings

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**BISONS BLAST** With a series sweep of the Herd over the weekend, the number-four ranked Golden Bears catapulted themselves into top spot in the Canada West ahead of provincial rival Calgary.

After a pair of gritty victories this past weekend over the ninth-ranked Manitoba Bisons, the Golden Bears volleyball squad now sits atop the Canada West standings with an 11–3 record.

Earning both wins was certainly not easy for the fourth-ranked Bears, as the Bisons entered the weekend determined and clinging to the conference's seventh and final playoff spot. Nevertheless, Manitoba couldn't pick up a win Friday night, despite the Bears failing to establish any rhythm and practically escaping with a five-set win.

Alberta looked sluggish for most of Friday's match, and were simply unable to take command and put down a pesky group of Bisons.

"I thought on Friday night in particular, Manitoba played very aggressively and they served quite well, which consequently put us in trouble. [On Saturday], I felt we served better than they did, especially when [Bears captain] Mike DeRocco went on a long run in the first set," Bears head coach Terry Danyluk explained.

DeRocco struggled at times Friday night with his service game, but displayed a vastly improved effort on Saturday, especially in the opening set when he delivered consecutive laser serves in a 12–0 Bears run.

"The new ball we have has changed the dynamics of our league to some degree and when Mike finds his serve and gets it going, it's tough for the opposition to handle," Danyluk asserted.

Serving, however, was not the only key to Saturday night's first set pasting of the Bisons, as the front wall recorded six blocks. Led by Spencer Leiske and Simon Lidster, the Bears continued to display their defensive might in the final three sets of Saturday's four-set victory, as they racked up a season high 21.5 blocks.

“Spencer has played exceptionally well for us this season, but he still has some things to learn. He played middle for our national championship team last year, so his transformation to the right side is still a work in progress,” Danyluk said.

Solid attack efficiency was another deciding factor in the Bears’ wins, as they recorded a total of 99 kills during the two games against Manitoba. Leiske and fifth-year senior Thomas Jarmoc tallied nearly two-thirds of Alberta’s kills versus the Bisons.

The Bears did get in trouble, however, early in sets when they were unable to execute efficiently and allowed the Herd to set the tempo and claim early leads in sets.

“We started slow, especially [on Friday], and they came out like gangbusters. [On Saturday], we came out more determined and were able to largely dictate the tempo of the match from the outset,” Danyluk noted.

Next week against the Brandon Bobcats, the Bears will need to get out of the gates a lot quicker if they're going to withstand an even more versatile offensive attack and maintain their position atop the Canada West standings.