

## SPORTS

## Panthers Update: Down The Stretch

For the five UPEI Panthers squads currently in action, the most important part of the season has arrived – the stretch drive. Here's a look at how they're doing.

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#### MEN'S HOCKEY: 7-14-2, 16 pts, 7<sup>th</sup> in AUS

The Panthers have seen some improvement in Dylan Taylor's second season as head coach, but remain wildly inconsistent. The green and white has shown an affinity for nationally ranked teams, beating the likes of Moncton, St. Mary's and St. Thomas, but continue to lose to bottom-feeders such as Dalhousie. The team has the talent to be successful, but has trouble keeping it together on a nightly basis.

Special teams have been a huge problem for the Panthers, with the power play (running at an anemic 11.6%) often not able to penetrate inside the perimeter and the penalty kill operating at a very average 82.9% going into Saturday's game at St. Mary's.

Paul Drew has been a bright spot for the Panthers as usual, posting a 3.55 goals-against average despite facing over 31 shots per game. Drew recently returned to the Island after winning a gold medal with Team Canada at the Winter Universiade 2007 in Torino, Italy. He played in every game.

Ryan Kitchen leads the Panthers in scoring with four goals and 24 points in 23 games. Cory Vitarelli is second with nine goals and 19 points, and Stephen Cooke sits third with two goals and 13 points. Erik Lundmark leads Panther defensemen with six goals and 11 points.

With five games left in the season, including Saturday's game, the Panthers sit four points back of Acadia for the sixth and final playoff spot. Four of those games are against the top three teams in the AUS, and the other is against Acadia. Realistically, UPEI will have to win at least four of those games, including the Acadia game, to have a shot at the playoffs. The Axemen play relatively weak opponents and have the edge in wins, so the Panthers will need a miracle to get in.

#### WOMEN'S HOCKEY: 2-11-1, 5 pts, 8<sup>th</sup> in AUS

It only gets worse for the women's Panthers, who, with seven games left in the season going into weekend action, sit five points back of a playoff spot. For Bruce Donaldson's squad, it's been similar to last year, when the team finished 4-15-0 and missed the playoffs.

The stats tell a bleak story for UPEI. The Panthers have been outshot 40-15 on average and outscored 5.3-1.6. Their special teams have made the men look



like the Anaheim Ducks, with an abysmal 9.1% success rate on the PP and an unheard-of 73.7% rate on the PK. And the second period has been Armageddon for the Panthers, where they've been outscored 24-4.

Genna Phelan leads the team in scoring with six goals and 10 points. Jennifer Sullivan and Tessa Roche both have seven points, the latter in just six games after coming over from the women's soccer Panthers. Four of those points came in a 5-2 win over UNB Dec. 2. Between Roche, Ashley Caulier, who has five points, and Josie Gallant, the soccer additions have definitely bolstered the squad. Elizabeth Legay and Diana Benell have split time in goal, both playing in nine games. Legay leads with a 4.71 GAA and .878 save percentage.

The playoffs are a pipe dream at this point, but if the Panthers can win three of their remaining seven games, they'll eclipse their win total from last season.

#### MEN'S BASKETBALL: 4-8, 16 pts, 5<sup>th</sup> in AUS

It has been a learning year for first-year coach Matt Davies. The Panthers, who went 10-10 last season, have taken a small step backward. Luckily for them, all four of their wins have been four-pointers, putting them in a comfortable playoff position with eight games to play. The top six teams make the AUS playoffs and seventh-place Memorial has eight points, eight back of the Panthers. However, the Seahawks have a fairly weak schedule the rest of the way and it could come down to two games between UPEI and Memorial, on the Rock, on the final weekend of the season.

The Panthers have been strong statistically this season. While being outshot

74-71.5, rebounding and steals have been particular strong points. UPEI has averaged 34.1 rebounds and 7.2 steals per game, as opposed to opponents' 30.6 and 6.5, respectively. The Panthers have shot just under 45% from the field and made 40% of their three-pointers.

Doug McKinney leads the Panthers with 16.3 PPG, followed by Sherone Edwards at 14.7 and Brent McLaren at 10.6. McLaren, recruited last summer from Capilano College in B.C., has proved to be a big pick-up by Davies, leading the Panthers with 4.1 assists, 1.6 steals. He is also 51% on three-pointers. Edwards leads the team with 9.0 RPG and is 46.4% on field goals.

#### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: 2-10, 4 pts, 8<sup>th</sup> in AUS

The Panthers have struggled under interim coach Dave MacNeill. Some adversity was expected with the impromptu resignation of Reagh Vidito two weeks before the season, but it's doubtful that many saw this coming. With eight games left in the season, the green and white are ten points out of a playoff spot and eight behind seventh-place Acadia. To have any hope whatsoever of squeaking in, they must win the three four-point games left on their schedule, as well as their two games remaining against Acadia – the team they've gotten both wins against. If they fail to perform in those games, they can kiss the playoffs goodbye.

The Panthers have been outscored by a whopping 14-point margin this season (72-58). They have shot just 36% from the field and 26.9% on threes. They have averaged 33.7 RPG to opponents' 38.0, 7.7 steals to opponents' 9.6, and 10.4 assists to opponents' 15.9. They have,

however, out-blocked their opposition 3-2, on average.

Melissa-Anne Campbell leads the Panthers with 16.5 PPG, followed by Sharise Richards (who recently received the \$2,500 Carr, Stevenson & MacKay basketball scholarship) at 10.4. Rookie Susanne Canvin leads the team with 7.7 RPG and has a wide edge over Lora Morton in blocks, with 2.4 per game. Jenna Kaye leads in the assists and steals departments, with 3.7 and 1.8, respectively.

#### WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL: 7-12, 14 pts, 5<sup>th</sup> in AUS

With two matches left in the season heading into Sunday's game against UNB, the women's volleyball Panthers are in the thick of an intense three-way race for the final two playoff spots. Memorial and Cape Breton are tied for sixth with 12 points, but both have a game in hand on the Panthers going into the final weekend of the season. UPEI must win its final match against last-place Dalhousie and hope that either the Seahawks or Capers lose one of their two games. That's a good bet, considering Memorial plays first-place UNB twice and the Capers play Acadia and Moncton, who sit in third and fourth place respectively.

The Panthers are getting noticeably beaten on kills, assists, and digs per game, and are virtually even with their opponents in terms of aces. They have won 27 games and lost 44.

Erin Kinsman leads the Panthers with 3.3 points per game, followed by Kayla Walsh at 2.6. Kinsman also has 2.3 kills and 0.4 blocks, which are tops on the team. Lindsay Fisher is the team's assist leader with 8.7, and Lindsay Rodgeron leads with four digs.