



# Canada West Universities Athletic Association

## 2009-10 Media Release

Thursday, October 29, 2009

### Canada West Men's Basketball Preview

#### Overview

Canada West basketball sees a big change in the league format, adopting a two-division system, with the Great Plains and Central Divisions merged and a Pacific Division that remains intact. The playoff format sees four Prairie teams make the post-season, three Pacific schools in and the team with the better record between the Prairie fifth-place finisher and Pacific fourth-place squad.

Gone to the pros is Henry Bekkering, leaving younger brother Ross, a 2008-09 All-Canadian, and a list of experienced student-athletes to lead the 2009 conference champion **Calgary Dinos**. The Dinos went on to finish in a tie for third at Nationals after a narrow semifinals defeat to UBC. Returning players include Tyler Fidler and Robbie Sihota, who combined for 30 points and almost 12 rebounds per game last season, as well as seniors Jamie McLeod and Lindsay Thoutet.

The **Trinity Western Spartans** look like a team ready to make waves through the conference season and into the playoffs. With CIS Player of the Year Jacob Doerksen (avg. of 20.8 points, 10.7 rebounds) in just his fourth year, the impact could even carry over into 2010-11. Louis Hurd, Jason Keegstra and Lance Verhoeff are just some of the experienced players surrounding Doerksen. Among many new recruits are NCAA transfers: forward Tyrell Mara and guard Calvin Westbrook.

All-Canadian guard Dany Charlery and fellow fifth-year Tarik Tokar, last year's second-best Canada West assist man, help make the **Brandon Bobcats** an instant contender for top spot in the Prairie Division. Donovan Gayle and Kyle Vince are also back, as is Martin Lawrence, who last played for the Bobcats in 2007-08.

The **Regina Cougars** missed qualifying for last year's Canada West Final Four by a whisker, losing by two points to Brandon in the third of a best-of-three series last February. Back to make a statement and take them deeper into the post-season are the team's top six scoring and rebounding players, including all five starters. All-Star Kris Heshka, fifth-years Jamal Williams and Paul Schubach and fourth-year players Jeff Lukomski and Jordan McFarlen return, though veteran Marek Downarowicz has been a starter during preseason in the absence of Lukomski, also a member of the Rams football team.

Last January, **Saskatchewan Huskies** All-Star guard Showron Glover became the fifth player in modern Canada West history to score 50 points in a game. After a quick exit from the playoffs, Glover & Co. expect better things this season. Four other Huskies will be in their fourth or fifth year of eligibility, including Michael Linklater and Troy Gottselig, while Nolan Brudehl averaged 11.3 points and 6.0 rebounds last year as a freshman.

All-Star Chris Dyck is gone from a **UBC Thunderbirds** roster that was dominant last year, going 21-2 and taking silver at both the conference and national level. Back to lead by example is Josh Whyte, who started all but one game last year, picking up 13.8 points and 3.6 rebounds per game. The supporting cast of veterans includes fifth-years Blain LaBranche and Kyle Watson. Nathan Yu will once again be a solid long-range threat.

The **Simon Fraser Clan** return three of five starters, but one missing is All-Star Greg Wallis, who put up 17.9 points and grabbed 9.6 boards per game last year, and the other is conference Defensive Player of the Year Frank Bradley. Back to try and make a longer playoff run in spring 2010 are Sean Burke, Matt Kuzminski and Kevin Shaw, who was injured and saw Bradley admirably take over his position last year.

For a team that focuses on defence, the **Victoria Vikes** have sure lost a lot on the offensive side of the court. Gone are Mitch Gudgeon, Tyler Hass and Brandon Dunlop, who combined to average 39 points per game last year, more than half of the Vikes' total offence. Back in the mix are guards Ryan MacKinnon and Cyril Indome, who averaged 9.7 and 6.3 points per game last year. MacKinnon is a former CIS All-Rookie selection who also has long-range shooting ability. The defence is strengthened by the return of Wendell Thomas and Mike Berg.

Despite just five wins for the **Lethbridge Pronghorns** last season, Danhue Lawrence is a game-breaker with the ability to take a team to a new level on his own. Averaging 19.7 points, 6.1 rebounds, 4.1 assists and 1.9 steals per game a year ago, Lawrence is

easily an All-Star if he improves on those numbers. Derek Waldner and Rob Cooper return, and post player Quinn Van Gaalen, who had 10.6 points per contest in his freshman year, returns from injury after a year off. Point guard Jeff Price has transferred to Lethbridge from the University of Calgary.

The **Alberta Golden Bears** have had many new introductions this year, including new head coach Greg Francis, who takes over for retired 26-year bench boss Don Horwood. With eight players also gone, including C.G. Morrison and two other top scorers, third-year guard Scott Leigh, senior Harvey Bradford and forward Sahr Saffa are left to lead a much younger group. Jeff Stork, a 6'9" forward also returns for his final season of eligibility. Of note is the addition of freshman Jordan Baker, son of former Alberta basketball stars Doug and Trix Baker.

After grabbing just five win last season, offensive leader Nick Lothar could help lead the **Winnipeg Wesmen** to a higher level of play. Veterans Peter Lomuro and Mike James, who combined to score more than 26 points and pull down about 13 rebounds a game in 2008-09, also bolster the offence for a team that ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and last in output last year. Height is certainly not a problem, with 6'10" Monmouth transfer Adam Dobriansky added to the roster after sitting out a year and 6'9" post Ryan Willerton down the middle.

Sam Freeman, 2008-2009 Canada West Rookie of the Year, is already emerging as a leader on a young **UFV Cascades** crew that includes just one roster player, James Eliot, who is beyond his third year of eligibility. After winning seven games with a younger roster last year, they Cascades figure to have a bright future and may even sneak into a playoff spot this year with a good performance.

Twenty-three year head coach Rick Suffield has stepped aside, handing the reigns to Kirby Schepp as new leader of the **Manitoba Bisons**. On the court, senior Nathan Dixon is one of just four players back from last year's roster, meaning even more may be expected from a player who averaged 19.6 points per contest. Eric Garcia will see more floor time, while third-year guard Dan Purvis-Collins will also be asked to step up.

After a 2-21 mark in 2008-09, interim head coach Thom Gillespie had the chance to put his stamp on the **Thompson Rivers WolfPack** roster with some new recruits this off-season. But it will be a corps group of veteran players, from 6'7" Jeff Friesen and 7'2" Greg Stewart to guard Sean Garvey and fellow senior Drew Bleth who have impact on the year ahead. The WolfPack have every reason to be optimistic about improvement going forward.

### **Alberta Golden Bears**

2008-09 conference record: 13-9 (2<sup>nd</sup>, Central)

2009 playoffs: 2-2 (t-5<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: 2004-05

Last CIS title: 2001-02

Change is the operative word for the Alberta Golden Bears basketball team as it enters the 2009-10 season.

At the forefront of this change is the head coach position, as 26-year bench boss Don Horwood announced his retirement in the fall of 2008, and then headed into the sunset after a playoff loss to the Calgary Dinos.

Stepping into Horwood's vacated spot among the U of A coaching ranks is former Fairfield University Stag Greg Francis. While at Fairfield the 6'3" Francis scored 1,570 points, which puts him fifth all-time in Stags' scoring history. He still holds the school record for career three-point field goals made (with 230) and was inducted into their Athletics Hall of Fame in 2003. During his senior season in 1997, Francis and the Stags held a halftime lead over the then No. 1-ranked North Carolina Tar-Heels during their "Round of 64" game at the annual NCAA basketball championship tournament. The Tar-Heels rebounded to win the game 82-74, but Francis finished with 26 points and eight three-pointers.

Francis takes over a team that went 13-9 last season in Canada West conference action, but was bounced from the playoffs in two straight games by provincial rival Calgary. Gone from that squad are eight players, including two starters and the team's top two scorers. Only Scott Leigh (guard), Harvey Bradford (guard) and Sahr Saffa (forward) return from last season's starting lineup, meaning there is lots of change on the floor as well.

Leigh, a fourth-year from North Vancouver, will be the team's starting point guard, and looked upon for reliable three-point shooting. He finished eighth in Canada West three-point percentage last season, and second in assists. Bradford was the team's third-leading scorer and top rebounder from last season and served as the team captain, which means Francis will be counting on the fifth-year guard for both his scoring and leadership skills.

Key newcomers include Jordan Baker, Rob Dewar, Jamaal Bucknor and Todd Bergen-Henengouwen.

Baker, the top high school recruit in the province of Alberta, and Ontario's Dewar both played for Francis on Canada's National Junior team this past summer at the FIBA U-19 world championship. Khas Toker and Jordan Hone are two recruits from the Canadian College Athletics Association that should figure into the mix as well.

### **Brandon Bobcats**

2008-2009 conference record: 13-9 (1<sup>st</sup>, Great Plains)

2009 CW playoffs: 3-3 (4<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: 2001-02

Last CIS title: 1995-1996

After finishing the season in conference play with a record of 13-9, the Bobcats were Great Plains champions last year with a win over the Regina Cougars in post-season play, proceeding to the conference Final Four. The Bobcats' season ended at the Final Four tournament with a loss to UBC." This year, the Bobcats would like to build on last year's success and not only make it to the Canada West tournament, but take it one step further.

Coach Keith Vassell, in his second year as coach at Brandon, was inducted as a player along with the rest of his 1995-96 Bobcat team into the Manitoba Basketball Hall of Fame on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. His team won the CIS Final 8 championship that year. It is an experience that Vassell would like to repeat as a coach. He says, "I'm very excited about the 2009-10 season. It should be very entertaining for fans. We're looking forward to building on last year's Final Four. Our goals are set on going to Nationals." Also returning this year is assistant coach Chris Kraus, in his second year with the Bobcat team.

The players leading the team this year will be fifth-year guards Dany Charlery and Tarik Tokar. Charlery was a First Team CW All-Star and a Second Team CIS All-Canadian last year and Tokar led the Canada West conference in assist-turnover ratio (3.38). "Dany has established himself as one of the top players in Canada and Tarik is one of the most effective point guards in the conference," said Vassell of his returning players.

Other returning players who are expecting to contribute to the team's success this year are Donovan Gayle, Kyle Vince and Martin Lawrence. Lawrence last played with the Bobcats in the 2007-08 season.

Some of the new faces that Vassell is adding to his team are Andrew Kraus, a third-year guard and transfer student from Acadia University, and several key first-year recruits, including 6'11" James Elias of Morden, MB, 6'6" Jordan Reaves of Winnipeg, and 6'0" Jelani Deliovsky from Hamilton, Ont.

Vassell summed up his team this year as "a good combination of young talented players along with a good veteran group."

### **UBC Thunderbirds**

2008-09 conference record: 21-2 (1<sup>st</sup>, Pacific)

2009 CW playoffs: 5-1 (2<sup>nd</sup>)

2009 CIS tournament: 2-1 (2<sup>nd</sup>)

Last CW title: 2007-08

Last CIS title: 1971-72

The UBC Thunderbirds took a big leap forward last year, making their way into the CIS championship game after first-round losses in the three previous seasons. With an impressive class of recruits and some key returning veterans, the 'Birds appear ready for another deep playoff run and a chance to avenge their CIS championship final defeat to Carleton.

Last year the T-Birds led the Canada West in offence (85.1 points per game), finished a close second in defence (66.1 points against), and had the best scoring margin (+19.0), best turnover margin (+4.39), second-best rebounding margin (+7.7) and the second most blocked shots (4.0 per game) in the conference.

The most impressive thing about UBC's numbers from last year is how they achieved them - as a team. The T-Birds didn't have a single player rank among the top 20 in the Canada West in scoring. Instead they had eight players average at least five points per game and three averaging double-digits.

This season, despite the loss of three fifth-year seniors, UBC will once again have an extremely deep and talented roster.

Josh Whyte, a 2008-09 CW All-Star, will be charged with leading the T-Birds offence. Last season he averaged 13.8 points per game, was fourth in Canada West with 4.9 assists and third in assist/turnover ratio at 2.2. Fifth-year seniors Blain LaBranche and Kyle Watson will be expected to lead both on and off the court. LaBranche is one of the smoothest shooters in the conference and Watson is a do it all forward who plays with a contagious energy and finds ways to make the big plays.

Other key returnees to the backcourt along side Whyte and LaBranche are fourth-year point guard Alex Murphy, third-year sharpshooter Nathan Yu and second-year Akeem Pierre, arguably UBC's most athletic player.

Up front the T-Birds do lose their two starting big men from the 2008-09 run, however, Brent Malish, the team's leading rebounder the last two seasons and one of the top three-point shooters in the conference, is back to lead the forwards. Juniors Graham Bath and Balraj Bains should also see their minutes increase as they look to take more minutes in the post.

The responsibility of a successful encore to a second-place finish at nationals won't fall solely on the returning players however, as the T-Birds have a strong recruiting class with five new players looking to make an immediate impact.

UBC welcomes three players with university experience in Kamar Burke, Denny Dumans and Melvyn Mayott with all three are expected to play big minutes right away. First-years Chad Posthumus, a 6'10'' centre from Winnipeg, and Tommy Nixon, a 6'5'' forward out of Kitsilano, will also see court time this season.

Changes abound at UBC this season, however, as long as these T-Birds can find the same consistency and contributions from their roster as last year's squad they figure to be among the top teams in the Canada West, fighting it out for a berth at the CIS championship.

### **Calgary Dinos**

2008-09 conference record: 17-5 (1<sup>st</sup>, Central)

2009 CW playoffs: 4-0 (1<sup>st</sup>)

2009 CIS tournament: 1-1 (t-3<sup>rd</sup>)

Last CW title: 2008-09

Last CIS title: none

A year after a heartbreaking loss at home in the conference championship tournament, the Calgary Dinos turned the tables on the UBC Thunderbirds last season, winning the Canada West title at Vancouver's War Memorial Gym. But it was the T-Birds that got the last laugh, defeating the Dinos in a hard-fought national semifinal in Ottawa to leave Calgary still searching for the school's first men's basketball national title.

The defending conference champs return four of five starters to the fold. The Dinos lost the services of Henry Bekkering, who is playing professional basketball in the Netherlands, but younger brother Ross is the team's unquestioned leader and is back for his fifth and final season. After breaking the school's all-time career rebounding record midway through his fourth year, Ross Bekkering was runner-up for the conference Player of the Year award and a Second Team All-Canadian in 2008-09.

After a solid summer with the National university team at the FISU Games in Serbia, Bekkering and fellow senior forward Robbie Sihota look to lead their squad to consecutive appearances in the national tournament in their final year of eligibility.

Swing man Tyler Fidler is back for his third season and will look for a breakout campaign, while senior Jamie McLeod provides a steady presence in the backcourt. Veterans Lindsay Thouret, Jordan Flagel and Dustin Reding will provide depth and leadership on a squad that has its sights on winning it all.

"We're definitely a contender again this year," said head coach Dan Vanhooren, who opens his 10<sup>th</sup> season at the helm of the program. "We're tougher defensively, we out-work teams, and we're executing better on offence. Our size up front is a huge advantage, giving us lots of second-chance opportunities that allowed us to average 70-75 shots per game in the preseason."

Vanhooren had a busy off-season recruiting and brought in several new faces that will be the faces of Dinos basketball in the future. The key new face is 5'9'' point guard Jarred Ogungbemi-Jackson, out of Winnipeg, who will crack the starting lineup at the beginning of the year. A two-time provincial high school MVP in Manitoba, Ogungbemi-Jackson has impressive speed and is a tenacious defender.

"Jarred is very quick, he has great hands, and he has the ability to make players around him better," said Vanhooren. "Having him out there with Jamie (McLeod) will be great experience for him. Jamie is still a leader with this team and a steady presence on the floor, and he's a great shooter.

Also joining the team are two players whose last names will be familiar to followers of CIS basketball: guards Dan Tilleman and Andrew McGuinness. McGuinness, the younger brother of former UBC women's star Erica, is a lights-out shooter from Handsworth in North Vancouver, while Tilleman is son of Dinos legend Karl Tilleman and joins the program from Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, Ariz.

Other new faces on the roster include transfer Terrence Blake from SAIT and six-foot-eight forward Patrick Walker out of Bert Church High School in Airdrie, Alta.

Calgary played a limited preseason schedule, but the Dinos made the most of their opportunities. Playing at one of the toughest non-conference tournaments in the nation, the Dinos swept through Western Ontario, Dalhousie and host Laval in Quebec City last weekend to earn the tournament title.

### **UFV Cascades**

2008-09 conference record: 7-16 (5<sup>th</sup>, Pacific, missed playoffs)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

Last year's outstanding rookie group is older and wiser, and will be counted on to lead the Cascades into the playoffs in the 2009-2010 season.

One of the key returning players for the Cascades is 2008-2009 Canada West Rookie of the Year Sam Freeman, who averaged 13.2 points per game, and was third in the conference in free throw percentage.

"Sam has the opportunity to show he is more than just a scorer for us this year. With more offensive talent around him this year, Freeman will be asked to create for himself and others as well as step up his game at the defensive end," says Cascades head coach Barnaby Craddock, back for his third season at Fraser Valley. "And, Joel Friesen has shown signs during the preseason of the type of impact player he can be, and a lot will be expected of him during his freshman season."

Friesen, who was named MVP of the 2008 B.C. High School championships while leading the Yale Lions to a provincial title, suffered a season-ending ACL knee injury prior to what would have been his rookie season in 2008-2009. He is now fully recovered and ready to make an impact at the CIS level.

Kyle Grewal (6'6", post), who averaged 6.1 points per game last year, returns for his third season, while Sheldon Bjorgaard (5'10", guard), Josh Kufske (6'5", post) and Jasper Moedt (6'7", post) are back for year two.

"With a young team last year we are hoping the experience and minutes they played will show benefits this year and in the future," stresses Craddock. "Grewal, Kufske, Moedt, Freeman and Bjorgaard all played major minutes for us, and with their development over last season, we feel they are ready to compete with the best in the country."

Craddock spanned the globe searching for talent this off-season, recruiting American Zeon Gray (5'10", guard) and Australian James Elliott (6'8", post).

"Zeon gives us a veteran leader at the point guard position. Having his on-court leadership will be crucial for us in big games," says Craddock. "James is a most-needed recruit for our program. As a post defender and rebounder he fills a huge void, and his ability to step outside on offence is an added bonus.

Also joining the Cascades is Craig Bauslaugh (6'1", guard), a transfer from Laurentian with CIS experience who has the ability to be an impact player this season.

The Cascades should be improved from last year's 7-16 season, but know it won't be easy moving up the standings.

"The Pacific Division is at its all time toughest but we have a team that can play with anyone in the CIS on a given night," insists Craddock. "We will put our game on the court every weekend, and have confidence we will be in a good position at the end of the season."

### **Lethbridge Pronghorns**

2008-09 conference record: 5-17 (4<sup>th</sup>, Central, missed playoffs)

Last CW title: 1985-86

Last CIS title: none

After the departure of seven-year head coach Mike Connolly, a familiar face returns to lead the Lethbridge Pronghorn, team alumnus Dave Adams. Adams takes over the program and will bring a new sense of enthusiasm to the Horns. It is Adams' second stint as the Horns bench boss after serving as the interim head coach during the 2001-02 season, between the departure of long time coach Dave Crook and the hiring of Connolly.

During the interim season, Adams led the Horns to a 6-14 record and a post-season appearance, losing in three games on the road to the Saskatchewan Huskies.

Coach Adams inherits a solid group of returning players that includes 2009 leading scorer Danhue Lawrence, second-year workhorse Derek Waldner and smooth shooting wing, Rob Cooper. Lawrence finished fifth in the conference in scoring average last season, averaging over 19 points a night.

After a positive freshman season two years ago, Southern Alberta product Quinn Van Gaalen returns after missing all of last season due to injuries. Van Gaalen showed great promise during his freshman season averaging more than 10 points a night splitting time as a starter and the sixth-man.

The Horns' biggest addition is a familiar face to Canada West basketball fans as, after sitting out last season, point guard Jeff Price transfers from the University of Calgary. He also played with the ACAC Mount Royal Cougars.

During his only season with the Dinos, Price averaged 12.3 points and 5.2 assists in over 33 minutes per game and was a member of the Dino team which finished with the best record in the Central Division and hosted the Canada West Final Four in 2007-08. As a Cougar, Price was named a CCAA All-Canadian and the Mount Royal Male Athlete of the Year for 2006-07.

The addition of Price will more than offset the graduation of point guard Allen Kadima. In his final season, Kadima set the Horns single season mark in assists, with 144. Also departed from last season is athletic wing Sephton Spence, who chose to return closer to home in Ontario.

Coach Adams has add substantial depth to the athletic returners and will look to transition the Horns into playing an up-tempo style of basketball. Other Horns newcomers include Randy Davis, Taylor Norum and Sean McCormick. Davis is the most decorated of the bunch, bringing with him three years experience at Red Deer College where he was an ACAC All-Star. Meanwhile, Norum and McCormick will both increase the Horns depth and versatility by bringing their 6'7 and 6'5 frames to the wing position.

With a reinvigorated program, the Horns look to return to the playoffs for the first time since the 2002-03 season.

### **Manitoba Bisons**

2008-09 conference record: 4-18 (4<sup>th</sup>, Great Plains, missed playoffs)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: 1975-76

Change is afoot with the Manitoba Bisons. After 23 years at the helm of the Bison men's basketball program, head coach Rick Suffield announced his decision to make the 2008-09 season his final season at the helm of the Herd.

With the departure of Suffield, first-year head coach Kirby Schepp takes over the reins at the young age of 34. Schepp has been very accomplished in a short amount of time. Over the last 14 seasons, he amassed a record of 333-143 while establishing the Sturgeon/Silver Heights as one of the top high school programs in Manitoba while leading them to five provincial final fours, five league championships and a 100% graduation rate of athletes. Schepp was also named both the 'AAAA' Boys Coach of the Year and the Coaching Manitoba Excellence in Coaching Award (School System) in 2007 plus in mid-April of 2009, Schepp was also selected to inaugural Cadet National basketball team U-17 coaching staff.

In his first season, Schepp will incorporate a fast-paced, shooting team. The team will be 'green' to start the new season, as there are only four returning players from last season and they will be leaned on to assist the newcomers as the season progresses. Fifth year guard Nathan Dixon looks to finish his last season in style, as he was the sixth leading scorer in Canada West last season with 19.6 points per game. Fourth-year guard Eric Garcia will be asked to shoulder more of the load after averaging 25 minutes and 9.2 ppg scoring last season. Third-year guard Dan Purvis-Collins (28.5 minutes per game; 8.2 ppg last season) and fourth-year forward Ian Dickey (15.0 minutes per game; 4.1 ppg last season) will be looked to provide versatility and contribute more this upcoming season.

Schepp is trying to establish a new culture, habits and the way the program approaches every aspect of making the team better every day. There is a new sense of commitment to a program that has a primary goal of breaking into the post-season for the first time in six seasons.

Some of the new players that will make an impact are guards Jonar Huertas and Kurtis Sansregret. Huertas and Sansregret both played high school basketball with the Sisler Spartans and their last team was the Red River College Rebels. With the Rebels, both earned 2009 Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference (MCAC) All-Conference award and played on the 2009 MCAC championship squad. Prior to the Rebels, both were part of the Spartans' 2006 provincial championship team.

In addition, forward Sean Maxwell will create match-up problems from the perimeter with his shooting touch as he also played with UBC during the 2007-08 season and averaged 5.5 minutes per game with 0.8 points per game during 17 conference games; forward Richard Reimer returns to the Bisons after a year absence with skill on the defence end and can shoot both from inside and outside and forward Braedon Speer is a Bison duo-athlete, as he also plays football, and adds a physical inside presence.

Schepp has stated that although Bisons might field the smallest CIS men's team this season that they will counter-balance with quickness and emphasize on outside perimeter shooting (especially three-points) from all five starters in the lineup.

It will be exciting year to watch a program begin anew and view how much they will grow during the season.

### **Regina Cougars**

2008-09 Canada West: 12-10 (2<sup>nd</sup>, Great Plains)

2009 CW playoffs: 3-3 (t-5<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

Regina will field an experienced, veteran lineup that the Cougars hope will lead them to a high finish in the new Canada West Prairie Division.

The Cougars return all five starters from last season, including Second Team All-Star Kris Heshka. Also returning are fifth-year forward Jamal Williams, fifth-year guard Paul Schubach, fourth-year guard Jeff Lukomski and fourth-year forward Jordan McFarlen.

“We’re definitely better this season,” said head coach James Hillis, who enters his 16<sup>th</sup> season along the sidelines. “We’ve added significant depth with guys who can go in and make a contribution athletically and give us quality minutes. We’ve definitely got high expectations for this season.”

Schubach, who has played in 88 consecutive conference games and has started every Canada West and post-season game for the Cougars since the 2006-07 season, will run the point again this season. Providing quality minutes as Schubach’s backup will be first-year guard Darius Mole, a Dallas product who attended St. Mary’s H.S. in Phoenix.

At shooting guard, Lukomski has proven to be one of the best in the conference from beyond the arc over the past three seasons. Lukomski has only played in two of the team’s six non-conference games so far this season, as he is also a cornerback on the U of R’s football team. With Lukomski’s absence, second-year guard Sterling Nostedt has seen a big increase in floor time. Michael Smith, a first-year guard from Brampton, Ont., can play at either one or two.

McFarlen stepped into a starting role last season and should continue to do so at the three position. The athletic McFarlen will be backed up by Medicine Hat College transfer Neil Olukoya and Lynn Gee. Gee, a former Rattler himself, can play at either the three or the four positions.

Williams is likely to start at four for the Cougars, but with his versatile skill set he can legitimately play any position on the floor. Williams has 924 career points over his four seasons with the team, the most of any active Cougar. Marek Downarowicz can also provide quality minutes at four, and has been pressed into a starting role so far this season with Lukomski unavailable. Forward Danny LeBeck, who last played for Casper College during the 2007-08 season, will be eligible after Christmas and could see time at either the three or four positions.

Heshka, who enjoyed a breakout season last year with averages of 16 points and 8.8 rebounds per game, will start at post for the Cougars. Connor Burns, a 6’7” first-year post out of Campbell Collegiate in Regina, will back up Heshka down low.

The Cougars compiled an early 5-1 non-conference record.

### **Saskatchewan Huskies**

2008-09 conference record: 10-12 (3<sup>rd</sup>, Central)

2008 CW playoffs: 0-2 (t-7<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: 1943-44

Last CIS title: none

On the strength of point guards Showron Glover and Michael Linklater, the Saskatchewan Huskie look to make waves in the Canada West this season.

In 2008-09, the Huskies were in a transition year after the graduation of five players. The majority of the players on the court were in just their first or second year of eligibility.

“The Huskies should be very competitive in a league that allows for any team to win on any given night,” said Huskie head coach Greg Jockims, who enters his 12<sup>th</sup> season at the helm. “Players like Showron Glover, Michael Linklater, Michael Lieffers, Nolan Brudehl and Troy Gottselig have to be the best players on any given night for the Huskies to win. We’ve had some good results in non-conference play so far and we want to continue to build upon that.”

Glover turned heads in the conference last season in his first in the Canada West. The 5’11” guard finished first in the Canada West in scoring, averaging 24.9 points per game. The 548 he scored put him fifth all-time in the Canada West record book for points in a single season. It also set a new Huskies record. He was named a Canada West First Team All-Star. Linklater returns to the Huskies to use his fifth and final year of eligibility after a four-year absence. In 2004-05 with the Huskies, Linklater scored 177 points and 52 rebounds in 36 overall games.

Forward Troy Gottselig, who enters his fifth year of eligibility, stepped up as a leader on the court in 2008-09, starting in all 22 games, averaging 14.5 points per game and pulling down a team-high 168 rebounds. He averaged 29.8 minutes per game. Second-year Nolan Brudehl will look to continue where he left off last season. He started 19 games, averaging 11.3 points per game and six rebounds per game in 27 minutes of playing time per game last year.

Also returning are forwards Michael Lieffers and Clint Unsworth. Lieffers had 146 rebounds and 121 points in 22 games last season, with Unsworth finished with 74 rebounds and 88 points. Guards Preston O’Brien, Patrick Burns, Duncan Jones and John Rochon all also return to the team.

Chris Unsworth, brother to Clint, joins the team for his third year of eligibility. The 6'8" forward played with the Calgary Dinos in 2006-07 and 2007-08 scoring 104 points and 62 rebounds. Guard Trevor Nerdahl, who will be in his fourth year, is also new to the team. Nerdahl played with the Trinity Western Spartans in 2005-06 and 2006-07, scoring 258 points and 54 rebounds in the two seasons.

Rookies Adam Wendt, cousin to former Huskie Andrew Spagrud, and Jeremy Svenkeson will join the team out of high school.

### **Simon Fraser Clan**

2008-09 conference record: 14-9 (4<sup>th</sup>, Pacific)

2009 CW Playoffs: 0-2 (t-7<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

After making their ninth straight post-season appearance in 2008-09, the Simon Fraser Clan eye a much deeper run in the 2009-10 post-season. The Clan, which were eliminated in the opening round of the Pacific Division playoffs by CIS finalist UBC, return four starters from last year's team.

The team had finished the 2008-09 regular season on a high note, winning its last three games to finish the regular season with a record of 14-9. Taking it for what it was, SFU head coach Scott Clark maintained that the team had to address its weaknesses individually and collectively.

"We have to shoot the ball better," said Clark. "All of the top teams were very high in scoring and we didn't do that well enough last season."

One of the bigger losses for the Clan is forward Greg Wallis. Wallis made his mark in his fifth and final year of eligibility for the Clan last season, leading the team in most offensive categories, while also being named a First Team Canada West All-Star. The Clan will also miss guard Frank Bradley, who filled in at shooting guard while Kevin Shaw (North Vancouver) recovered from preseason knee surgery. Bradley was known for his strong defensive play and ended up being rewarded for it, earning the title of 2009 Canada West Defensive Player of the Year. Sean Burke (North Vancouver), Matt Kuzminski (Nanaimo, B.C.) and Shaw all return and all are entering their fifth years, respectively. At the five spot on the floor, third-year forward Eric Burrell (Surrey, B.C.) will be leaned on to provide rebounding support at both ends of the floor.

Burke enters the Canada West regular season tied for the all-time career SFU record for assists with 503, and is twelfth all-time in the Canada West for regular season assists.

In hopes of replenishing the talent lost in the off-season, Simon Fraser recruited small forward Chris Kok (Lynden, WA). Kok averaged 12 points, eight rebounds and three assists per game in his second season for the Skagit Valley Community College Cardinals in Mount Vernon, Washington. A former two-sport star, he is known to be a strong all-round player with the ability to play multiple positions well. One key area where he can assist the Clan is rebounding.

"The top four teams last year had rebound margins of seven or greater," said Clark. "We were at plus-two. That gives our opponents a much greater leeway."

Clark also acknowledges that the team was acceptable in ball handling but that the team may still have to change itself technically in order to fully improve. While the Clan place a high emphasis on the team collectively being able to improve themselves to replace off-season losses, there are leaders on this team who have been around for quite some time.

Kuzminski will be one of the players counted on to step up. The fifth-year swing guard has proven to be a pure scorer having finished second to Wallis last season in nearly all of the major offensive categories. Point guard Burke made his mark last season, showing his great vision from the back court. In what was his fourth year last season, the North Vancouver-native averaged 12 points and five assists per game. Also, fifth-year guard Shaw will be counted on to step up defensively, playing in the back court.

Off the bench, Kevin Pribilsky (Victoria), Jordan Nostedt (Brandon, Man.), Greg Gillies (Nanaimo, B.C.) and Tallon Milne (Vanderhoof, B.C.) will all have an increased role on the team coming off the bench. Pribilsky is coming off his rookie year and is expected to continue to add depth at point guard for the Clan. Milne is also coming off a rookie season in which he was used off the bench. The 6'8" post out of Nechako Valley Secondary will also see a bit more playing time this season. Gillies is a high energy forward who provides rebounding and defensive support, while Nostedt is a spot-up shooter who can play the swing position.

### **Thompson Rivers WolfPack**

2008-09 conference record: 2-21 (6<sup>th</sup>, Pacific, missed playoffs)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

Thom Gillespie is back for his second year as interim head coach of the WolfPack. Unlike last season, Gillespie had the chance to try and recruit players for this campaign. The WolfPack were bolstered by the return last year of forward 6'7" Jeff Friesen (5<sup>th</sup>, Duncan, B.C.) and 7'2" Greg Stewart (4<sup>th</sup>, Kamloops, B.C.). Both are expected to play pivotal roles in any success the team enjoys this year. So, too, is guard Sean Garvey (5<sup>th</sup>, Kamloops), who has returned to play out his final year.

Guard Drew Bleth (5<sup>th</sup>, Ridgefield, WA) is back to run the offence. Guard Hudson Naylor (2<sup>nd</sup>, Kamloops) and forward Charles Barton (2<sup>nd</sup>, Vernon, B.C.) will get more court time this season.

Matt Pierce (3<sup>rd</sup>, Winnipeg) and Connor Agnew (4<sup>th</sup>, Prince Rupert, B.C.) have also returned. The key recruit for the WolfPack this season out of high school is 6'6" forward Travis Beck (Vernon, B.C.), who averaged 18 points, 12 rebounds and 3.5 blocks per game with Fulton, a team which finished 10<sup>th</sup> at the B.C. "AA" championships this past season.

The WolfPack have two new players from Ontario. Guard Milos Janjic (Toronto) comes from Central Commerce Collegiate, while Joseph Tubbs (Mississauga, Ont.) is a highly regarded forward out of Father Michael Goetz. One other rookie joining the WolfPack is guard Gerry Brown (Kamloops). He was a solid contributor with the South Kamloops Titans, which won the Okanagan "AAA" championship last season and finished third at Provincials.

### **Trinity Western Spartans**

2008-09 conference record: 17-6 (2<sup>nd</sup>, Pacific)

2009 CW playoffs: 3-4 (3<sup>rd</sup>)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

Having locked down the best recruiting class in school history the expectations for this year's Trinity Western Spartans are extremely high.

Last year, under rookie head coach Scott Allen, the Spartans had their best season in the CIS, finishing third in Canada West at 20-10 and a No. 10 CIS ranking. TWU was within a game of making its first trip to the CIS championship, so when you add the strength of last year's team to an exceptional recruiting class you have a fan base the hopes that the Spartans will make it to the CIS championship this season.

"We are deeper team this year, which should allow us to rest our key players. And our overall size will help us control the boards and eliminate second chance points for the opposing team," commented Allen. "Playing in the Canada West will be very tough and each weekend we will need to be focused mentally, tactically and physically if we are to be successful."

Last year the Spartans were led by CIS Player of the Year forward Jacob Doerksen (4<sup>th</sup>, Abbotsford, B.C.). This year the 6'6" forward, who averaged 20.8 points and 10.7 rebounds per game, will have plenty of help around the floor.

The new recruiting class has the Spartans suiting up two NCAA transfers: forward Tyrell Mara (White Rock, B.C.) and guard Calvin Westbrook (Courtenay, B.C.). Mara is a strong addition both on and off the court. The 6'6" forward brings three years of NCAA Division I experience from the Portland University to the Spartans, which includes two trips to the NCAA tournament. Westbrook, who transfers from NCAA Division II Stanislaus, sat out last season while attending TWU. The 6'5" guard will bring athleticism and scoring to the Spartan squad. "Tyrell will bring his leadership through his experience and his aggressive style of play," said Allen. "Calvin will give us a scorer in every dimension of the game."

Rounding out the top of this year's recruiting class, with 10 new faces on the team, are Yuba College transfer guard Niko Monachini (6'6", Richmond, B.C.), BCCAA Player of the Year forward Clint Wickham (6'8", Langara, Richmond, B.C.), TRU transfer guard Lucian Sauciuc (3<sup>rd</sup>, 6'3", Coquitlam, B.C.), CBC transfer guard Elijah Nakagawa (5'8", Surrey, B.C.) and first-year Luke Braund (6'5", forward, St. Georges, Vancouver).

Returning for the Spartans are guards Louis Hurd (5<sup>th</sup>, 5'11", Spokane, WA), who averaged 13 points per game, Danny Horner (4<sup>th</sup>, 5'11" Abbotsford, B.C.), who averaged 2.2 points per game and Ryan Froese (4<sup>th</sup>, 6'4", Winnipeg) and forward's Jason Keegstra (4<sup>th</sup>, 6'7", Vernon, B.C.), who averaged 6.4 points and 4.8 rebounds per game, Lance Verhoeff (4<sup>th</sup>, 6'8", Calgary), who averaged 5.7 points and 3.4 rebounds per game and Joe Vroom (5<sup>th</sup>, 6'9", Abbotsford), who averaged 1.6 points and 1.4 rebounds per game.

"I expect that this team will become much stronger as we go as new players and old will take time to become one on the court," added Allen.

On paper the Spartans have the leadership, talent and depth to compete with any team in the CIS. Only time will tell if what's on paper transfers to the court and puts TWU in Ottawa in March.

### **Victoria Vikes**

2008-09 conference record: 17-6 (3<sup>rd</sup>, Pacific)

CW playoffs: 1-2 (t-7<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: 2005-06  
Last CIS title: 1996-97

The UVic Vikes have led the Canada West in defensive scoring for five consecutive years, and with an emphasis on “d” assured again for 2009-10, this year's task at hand will be improving production at the opposite end of the floor.

The loss of Mitch Gudgeon, Tyler Hass and Brandon Dunlop has left the Vikes tasked with replacing their top three scorers from a year ago. Vikes head coach Craig Beaucamp, who has compiled a 91-38 conference record during his six years at the helm, expects expanded roles for returning players and a talented incoming class to help offset the loss.

“We don’t have one person that is going to make up for any one person, but what we have is more players who can contribute in a variety of different ways,” said Beaucamp.

The Vikes’ top returning scorers are guards Ryan MacKinnon and Cyril Indome, who averaged 9.7 and 6.3 points per game, respectively. MacKinnon, a CIS All-Rookie selection in 2008, is a 6’4” slashing player who was also the team’s best three-point shooter a year ago. Indome has an earned reputation as a long-range marksman, which was cemented by seven-for-eight three-point barrage against Trinity Western in mid-January.

In the front court, the Vikes will lean on veterans Wendell Thomas and Mike Berg for defence and rebounding. Thomas, a 6’6” high-flyer, improved as last season wore on, his first at UVic since transferring from UBC-Okanagan, and was one of the Vikes’ top performers in the post-season. The 6’8” Berg, meanwhile, makes his return to the hardwood after taking a one-year hiatus to play rugby for the Vikes. Berg also represented Canada’s U-20 team at the 2008 Junior world championship.

Beaucamp will also turn to a quartet of immediate-impact transfers - Nick Adair, Omid Pourmomen, Zac Andrus and Dan Evans - who have all received some form of conference collegiate honours.

Adair and Pourmomen were B.C. College All-Rookie selections last season. The 6’8” Adair earned Rookie of the Year honours at Camosun College after averaging 13.1 points and 7.6 rebounds per game. The 6’4” Pourmomen averaged 13.3 points for Kwantlen University and his 8.5 boards per game ranked tops in the league among guards.

The MacKinnon Gym regulars will remember Andrus as Whatcom College’s 5’10” point guard who toasted the Vikes for 25 points in a December exhibition game last season. The Vashon, WA native was later named conference All-Star after averaging 12.1 points and a team-leading 3.4 assists. Evans is a 6’3” guard who was a two-time provincial All-Star at Capilano University, and in 2007-08 finished second in the league in scoring with 19.6 points per game.

“With the high-calibre of play in the Canada West there is always a level of adjustment with new players,” said Beaucamp. “But when you look at our roster we also have some players that have been around for awhile, getting more comfortable in this league, who could be poised for a breakout.”

With such an influx of talent, and new expectations for returning players, the Vikes have no shortage of answers to address offence. It’s finding the right mix, combined with a top-tier defence, that Beaucamp hopes will provide an equation for success in the 2009-10 campaign.

### **Winnipeg Wesmen**

2008-09 conference record: 5-17 (3<sup>rd</sup>, Great Plains)

2009 CW playoffs: 1-2 (t-7<sup>th</sup>)

Last CW title: none

Last CIS title: none

Head coach Dave Crook is entering his ninth season with the Wesmen and will field a veteran-filled roster.

Fourth-year guard Nick Lothar will be the leader on and off the court this season and will handle a majority of minutes as the starting point guard.

Forward Peter Lomuro continued to impress last season and once again provides the team with another scoring weapon. Mike James, also in year number four, is coming off a solid 2008-09 season and will be looked upon to provide even more scoring and leadership this season. James Horaska showed his toughness last season and will be looked upon to be a force at both ends of the court.

The team will be strong in the post position this season. Adam Dobriansky, at 6’10, will see the court after sitting out last season after transferring from Monmouth University (NCAA). Ben Kingdon and Ryan Willerton (6’9”) will provide added depth in the middle. Rounding out the veteran group are second-year players Chris Jordan, Wesmen Rookie of the Year last season, Justin Phillips and Eric Zimmerman.

Coach Crook has also assembled a strong recruiting class for the 2009-2010 season. Brayden Duff (a two-time provincial champion with Garden City), Pawel Gacon (St. Paul's) and Mark Ridd (Oak Park) all have the necessary tools to make an immediate impact right away. Craig Penniston, a transfer from Lakeland College and Moses Ma, from Hong Kong, give the team added depth at the guard position.

"A solid group who have been together for the last few years, this is their opportunity to take a step forward and shine. The combination of Nick Lothar and Peter Lomuro give a strong back court where both have the ability to score off dribble or off the catch. By adding Adam Dobriansky we have some solid depth in the post to go along with last years starters Mike James and Ben Kingdon. This combination should give us a legitimate inside threat all season long.

Our overall depth of talent has improved, which is a relief after the last few seasons which have seen us terribly undermanned by a few cruel injuries. We are excited about our group as a whole and think they have the ability to compete with the best teams in Canada west on a day to day basis, now they just have to go out and get it done", added Crook.

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#### **About CWUAA**

"Canada West is consistently the most decorated of the four conferences in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), winning at least 10 CIS national titles every year since 1997-98. Comprised of 14 schools, from the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, the CWUAA produces numerous major award winners and Academic All-Canadian student-athletes each year, with many going on to athletic success around the globe in pro leagues and events such as the Olympics, Paralympics or Universiade Games."