SOCCER BEARS HEAD TO PLAYOFFS

**SOCCER PREVIEW**

**Bears @ Vikes**

Saturday, Nov 4-5

UVic/CanWest Playoffs

Ravanne Lawday

**STAFF WRITER**

Despite a split in last weekend’s games, the Golden Bears men’s soccer team are more prepared than ever for the Canada West playoffs this weekend.

Saturday’s game saw the team pull an impressive 2-1 win against the Fraser Valley Cascades, where three of the goals were scored in the second half. But the next day, the Bears lost to the University of Victoria Vikes by a score of 0-0.

The Cascades were a force to be reckoned with early in the Saturday afternoon game, attempting a shot at goaltender Jay Vetuch — the first of 13 — just over one minute into play. Fraser Valley scored three goals before halftime, with the Golden Bears managing only one.

The second half, however, belonged almost exclusively to the Green and Gold. On 17 attempts, the team scored three goals, two of which were less than one minute apart, and went on to defeat the Cascades with only seconds left on the clock.

Although the game resulted in a victory for U of A, assistant coach Kyle Jhamandas still had some constructive criticism for the team.

“We could have definitely put it away a lot earlier than that,” he said. “We had a lot of chances earlier in the game.”

The Bears had high hopes for the next day’s game against the Western division leaders, the University of Victoria Vikes. Unfortunately, these hopes were dashed with a loss for the Golden Bears in a low-scoring game. The Vikes displayed why they’re ranked first in their division, attempting a total of 19 shots on goaltender Matthew Preston.

The Bears’ defensive players were given a chance to shine and only allowed the UVic team to make their first shot at goal ever 11 minutes in. The Vikes scored their first goal 33 minutes into the game.

The second half was also dominated by the visiting team. Although the Bears’ defense remained strong, they suffered a 2-0 loss. This might seem a daunting loss — especially right before playoff season — but Jhamandas and the team have a positive outlook about the upcoming CanWest playoff games.

“Well be playing the same team in CanWest next weekend, so it’s kind of like a second opportunity for us to go there, get ourselves in order, and get back to that high level of play,” Jhamandas said.

“We still have a chance to go and finish the season on a high note, and keep it rolling into nationals.”

The 9-4-1 Bears will take their shot at redemption on Nov. 5, when they play the Vikes at Centennial Stadium in Victoria for the CanWest playoffs.

Jhamandas and the team also have the national playoffs in their sights. Only one CanWest team, besides the UVic host, will attend CIS championships from Nov. 30-2.

“We’re all pretty excited for that chance,” he said. “But we know that there’s a lot of work to be done this week and that won’t be easy. But, there’s a lot of character with this group, a lot of leadership, and a lot of talent. We think that there’s a good chance that we can hopefully move forward to nationals.”

**SOCCER PANADS MOVE TO CANWEST FINAL**

The soccer Pandas are the number three ranked team in Canada West — number seven in the country — and head out this week to Vancouver to compete against Trinity Western, UBC and UVic in the CanWest playoffs.

Only the top two teams will continue on to CIS nationals at McGill Nov. 10-13. After a win-tie weekend for the Pandas in their final conference games last weekend — with a 4-0 win against Manitoba on Saturday and a scoreless game against Regina the next day — head coach Liz Jepson said that Sunday’s 0-0 game against Regina wasn’t a shock. Despite the Cougars’ 1-0 win season and second-to-last CanWest ranking, Jepson still considers them a strong team.

“Regina has a solid team, so their defense is excellent and they work hard and they put up a great barrier for us to score,” she said.

The focus now for the Pandas is on the upcoming game against UBC. The playoff games are going to be intense in such a competitive league.

“I think we’ve understood from the beginning that finishing in the top four is a good thing. All the teams that are going to be in playoffs — doesn’t matter what team you play, it’s going to be a tough game,” Jepson said.

The 9-4-1 Pandas have managed to notch in 30 goals this season from 135 shots on net, the majority of those scored by striker Heather Land with 11, followed by forward Amanda Black with six.

Keeper Kelly Biggs has made 53 saves out of 235 shots on net in her 14 games this season.