

07-08 Bison Women's Hockey Canada West Preview

General Info

Team: Manitoba Bisons

Name of Arena: Max Bell

Head coach: Jon Rempel/entering his 4th year

Conference: Canada West

Quick Facts

2006-07 Canada West Standings finish?: 3rd place with 30 points in conference (two points back of second place Regina)

2006-07 Canada West Tournament/Playoff placing?: 2-3 record; Lost to Alberta in Canada West Final in two games in best-of-three series; defeated Regina in Canada West Semi Final in three games in best-of-three series

2007 CIS Nationals Placing?: 2-1 record; Seeded sixth at the CIS Championship, Manitoba lost 4-1 to #1 seed McGill; beat #4 seed Moncton by a 4-1 score; defeated the #2 seed Laurier (Ontario University Athletics Champion) by a score of 3-2 in the bronze medal game

2006-07 Overall Record?: 23-18-1

2006-07 Conference Record?: 15-9-0

Last Canada West Title?: N/A

Last CIS Title?: N/A

2007-08 Preview: Last season was a banner year for the Bison women's hockey program. Manitoba ended their 2006-07 season with a bronze medal at the 2007 CIS Championship at the University of Ottawa. In their second appearance at the CIS Nationals in the ten year program's history, the Bisons have now earned a bronze medal in 2005 and 2007. They entered as a Canada West finalist and seeded sixth in the six-team Championship. After losing their first game to #1 seed McGill (4-1), they beat #4 Moncton (4-1) and in the bronze medal game, the Bisons won 3-2 against #2 seed Laurier (Ontario University Athletics Champion).

During the 2006-07 season, Manitoba had their best regular season in the ten-year history of the program by registering the most wins (15 – old mark was seven) and points (30 – old record was 18). The Bisons finished the regular season in third place, two points behind second place Regina, with 30 points. The team was ranked as high as number seven during the season and was in the CIS Top 10 for 15 of 19 weeks.

The team qualified for the playoffs for the third consecutive season and defeated Regina in the Canada West Semi-Final on the road for the third consecutive season. They also earned a berth into the Canada West Final for the third straight season and battled and lost to the Alberta Pandas in two games.

Bison women's hockey head coach Jon Rempel was named the Canada West Female Hockey Coach of the Year for 2006-07 season. This was the second time he has earned the award (2004-05) in three seasons. Along with Rempel, four Bisons were recognized with conference all-star selections. Goalie Stacey Corfield was named as a Canada West First Team All-Star, forward Leanne Kisil was named a second team all-star, defenceman Jaclyn Van Deynze and Brenna Leary were also named to the second team all-star teams. Kisil was awarded Most Sportsmanlike Player of the CIS Championship.

Fourth year head coach Rempel has 25 players (three goalies, six defencemen and 16 forwards) on the roster with only five players entering their first year of eligibility. "I think expectations are different this year," stated Rempel. "This is a veteran team. I know what to expect from the players and what they are capable of doing over the last three years. They are ready to step up to the next level."

For 2007-08, Rempel talked about a team goal of earning a playoff spot and hosting a playoff round at home. This has not occurred in the program's history and Rempel felt it would be good for the players, fans and exposure to the program but if they have to play playoff hockey on the road, then the team has been successful in the past.

"I won't change philosophy on defensive care but I think this group is ready to be strong offensively as well. It will be emphasized that to be a good team, we must play well at both ends of the ice."

Manitoba was strong last year in special teams (88% penalty kill and 17% power play) and Rempel continues to stress the importance to the squad.

The Bisons will build towards the playoffs and have earned the respect and focused of other teams. Rempel knows the team will have to prove the accolades received in the past and not get ahead of themselves. In the first half, Manitoba

will have eight road conference games and a key back-to-back home series against Alberta and Regina to gauge where the team stands early in the year.

The whole nucleus returns for the Bisons. Led by captain Leanne Kisil (team leading scorer and tenth in Canada West with 20 points in conference regular season and five power play goals), assistant captain Stephanie Messner (ten assists and 13 points), Sarah Stebeleski (six PPGs and 14 points), Meghan Ross (seven PPGs and 12 points), Katherine O'Rourke (three shorthanded goals and 15 points), Shannon Hoogsteen (four game-winning goals and 14 points) and Tammy Brade (11 points in rookie season). On defense, Brenna Leary (led team and fourth in Canada West with 11 points), Amanda Schnell and Chelsea Braun (both had nine points) add depth while goalie Stacey Corfield returns after posting the third best conference goals against at 2.17 with ten wins and two shutouts.

One significant addition to the team was Addie Miles. The 18 year old forward was team captain for Team Manitoba at the 2007 Canada Winter Games and led the team to a silver medal with six assists in five games. In 2006-07, Miles played with the Warner Warriors and averaged over a point a game with 55 points (25 goals, 30 assists) in 50 games.

Rempel concluded, "This is the strongest group of forwards in my tenure. There are four solid lines that I will not be afraid to play. The team is taking nothing for granted. We need to 'go about our business' this season and learn how to win and be successful as a group and the results will come."