

07-08 Bison Women's Volleyball Canada West Preview

General Info

Team: Manitoba Bisons

Name of Venue: Investors Group Athletic Centre

Head coach: Ken Bentley/entering his 22nd year

Conference: Canada West

Quick Facts

2006-07 Canada West Standings finish?: First place with 18-2 record and 36 points

2006-07 Canada West Tournament/Playoff placing?: Received bye to Canada West Final and finished second losing to Alberta 3-1 in gold medal match

2007 CIS Nationals Placing?: Seeded #3 and lost 3-2 to #6 seed Trinity Western in first match and 3-2 to #7 seed Ottawa in second match

2006-07 Overall Record?: 24-5

2006-07 Conference Record?: 18-2

Last Canada West Title?: none

Last CIS Title?: 2001-02 season

2007-08 Preview: The Bisons set out to erase the memories to their finish of the 2006-07 season at the CIS Championship. After a record-setting regular season, the Bisons only went 1-3 in the playoffs and fell short of accomplishing their goal of a CIS Championship.

Bison women's volleyball head coach Ken Bentley said, "We learnt lessons from the stretch run from last season. It was a disappointing end to the season but we all recognize that the team is good enough to win this year."

Last season, the Herd held the #1 ranking in the CIS Top for 11 of the 13 weeks during the season. They rattled off nine consecutive conference wins to

end the regular season. During the 2006-07 season, **Manitoba won the Canada West regular season title with an 18-2 record, hosted the Canada West Final Four (Championship) and gained a berth into the Nationals for the first time in five years.** The Herd reversed the last two years of fortune, as they did not qualify for the post-season (last season: 11-9; 2004-05: 4-16). This turnaround occurred with six new rookies into the lineup this season. The Bisons won four consecutive pre-season tournaments to start the season, earned the #1 ranking heading into the new season, lost consecutive matches only once since the start of the 2006-07 season and swept ten conference matches in three sets.

The squad completed their 2006-07 season with a 1-1 record at the Canada West Final by losing the gold match to Alberta by a 3-1 margin. At the 2007 CIS Women's Volleyball Championships in Calgary, the team was seeded third but fell in two tough five set games against #6 seeded Trinity Western Spartans and #7 seeded Ottawa Gee-Gees. The two losses at the CIS Championship were the only two losses by the Herd in five sets during the entire season.

This season, Manitoba retains the core with eight returning veterans and supplemented with four accomplished recruits. **The talented 12-person roster includes only one senior, two fourth year players, five second year players and four first year players.**

Bentley believes the young group did a fantastic job of handling the intensity of last season and will be more methodical as they know what to expect this season.

The team has several weapons. Team captain Sabrina Barnes returns for her fourth season. Last season, Barnes was Canada West Second Team All-Star, ended ninth at 3.23 in conference digs and third on team with 176 kills in regular season. Erin Nieuwenburg enters her fourth year and was second on the team with 176 kills in regular season and in the 2007 playoffs and CIS Championship, was second on the team with 37 kills. Fifth year Amy Matthews provides leadership and added 33 kills in 2007 post-season action, fifth on team with 125 kills in regular season and finished seventh with 0.31 conference service aces.

Ashley Voth had an amazing rookie campaign as she was named CIS and Canada West Rookie of the Year. Voth was the second Bison to earn CIS Rookie of the Year (Kathy Preston, 1997-98). She started the season after completing stint with the National Senior Team (second youngest in history) and the National Junior Team. She lit up the Canada West conference in her first season. In her rookie campaign, the Winnipeg native showed her force by being named a Canada West Female Athlete of the Week, third in the conference with a .336 hitting percentage and fifth in Canada West blocks with 1.08 per game plus led team stats in kills and blocks.

The rest of the retuning core includes second year Sarah Morrisette who had 36 kills in post-season and fourth on team at 133 kills and third on team with 172 digs in her rookie year. Second year Christine Ewert was the libero and had 27

digs in 2007 playoffs and 105 digs in regular season. Amy Sigfusson and Amy Matthews also contributed during their first year with the Bisons.

With the creation of the T.D. “Davey” Einarsson Bison Women’s Volleyball Endowment Fund because of U of M Alumnus Mr. Theodore David Einarsson generously gift of \$360,000 to the Bison Women’s Volleyball Program, Bentley has called it ‘single biggest event and impact on our program.’ It is the single largest individual donation in Bison Sports history. The fund has already assisted for recruiting in the present and the future.

Bentley has had another great recruiting class with four recruits being involved with National championship teams at the provincial and club level. Setter Samantha Loewen, right side Kate Wasyliw, left side Jillian Enns and middle Tricia Mayba to the Bison program for the upcoming season.

The Herd lost the service of setter Katie Davidson who was a 2006-07 CIS Second Team All-Canadian and Canada West First Team All-Star and fifth year Lauren Mackenzie.

Bentley stated that there will be a greater emphasis on winning the Canada West Championship to receive a higher seed at the CIS Championship. He commented, “We are deeper than last season and the first year players can challenge for playing time with one recruit being a starter at the setter position.”

Bentley continued, “The ultimate goal is to win. It is very difficult to get out of Canada West as it is a great conference and it will be an incredible challenge with only three spots to CIS. I believe we have the temperament and maturity to deal with the adversity and challenges that will be presented this season.”