Team ideal pays off

Cap College's Amanda Beers (left) and Marie Rwigema share a laugh during practice for upcoming provincial championship.

Win or lose, Cap College women want to have fun

Stories by Steve Ewen

Sports Reporter

"They don't have any big-name stars. They don't go through a typical practice. And they don't seem to have a care in the world. But they just might be the best college women's basketball team in B.C. before all is said and done."

The Capilano College Blues, led by coach Paul Chiarenza, are a free-spirited, free-wheeling, good-time gang. Just because they're easy-going, though, doesn't mean they're easy to beat, evidenced by the fact that they started the year at 8-1 before finishing at 14-4, good enough for third place in the B.C. Colleges Athletic Association standings.

"We really want to win for each other and our whole little idea of what a team should be," said Blues guard Marie Rwigema. "We want to win for the fun, team idea. We want to win to prove that you don't have to be a super psycho hardcore team to be a championship team. We want to win to prove that you don't need a coach that's yelling at you every other minute to be successful."

"Paul wants everybody to get the most out of it. He doesn't want superstars. He wants everybody to be a part of the team in every way. And when you don't succeed you feel like you're letting him down and letting down the idea of what a team should be." The laid-back Chiarenza certainly has some kooky ideas by basketball standards. When he feels practice is getting monotonous, he runs his team through his "fancy lay-up drill," where his players must do something off-the-wall en route to putting the ball through the hoop. Or, instead of running wind sprints, he takes them to a field out back and has them sprint deep routes while he throws them a football. But, beneath all that, the 27-year-old has a firm grasp on team-building. He's recruited personalities as much as players, and his team meshes well. That's part of the reason why, without a single provincial all-star team player, they can compete with the likes of the first-place Fraser Valley Cascades, who have a half-dozen former high school stars.

"We've got a lot of natural skill on this team but we have more heart than anything," said 6-foot-4 centre Melissa Chancey. "We've got a lot of people on this team that want to win to prove that you don't need a coach that's challenging you all the time."

"This team is very strong right now," said SFU coach Liam Donnelly. "We've got a lot of natural skill on this team but we have more heart than anything," said 6-foot-4 centre Melissa Chancey. "We've got a lot of people on this team that want to win to prove that you don't need a coach that's challenging you all the time."

But, beneath all that, the 27-year-old has a firm grasp on team-building. He's recruited personalities as much as players, and his team meshes well. That's part of the reason why, without a single provincial all-star team player, they can compete with the likes of the first-place Fraser Valley Cascades, who have a half-dozen former high school stars.

"We've got a lot of natural skill on this team but we have more heart than anything," said 6-foot-4 centre Melissa Chancey. "We've got a lot of people on this team that want to win to prove that you don't need a coach that's challenging you all the time."

CSU looks very strong in the pool

After a year out, Ryan Laurin and Graham Duthie are looking to swamp the competition at the NAIA swimming and diving championships at SFU this week. Laurin, a junior from Mission, and Duthie, a senior from Fort Saskatchewan, Alta., red-shirted last year for SFU, and instead focused on international competition. SFU won the NAIA men's title in convincing fashion and, with Laurin and Duthie back, they're favoured to do it again this year.

Laurin is the Canadian champion in the 50-metre freestyle and is almost two full seconds faster than his closest NAIA competitor this year.

Duthie, meanwhile, is a former Canadian champion in the 100 metres and has been winner of the meet in his three previous NAIA championships.

"Laurin is a solid performer for us and is very strong right now," said SFU coach Liam Donnelly. "He couldn't not only be in position to break a record in the 50 free but he could challenge Alex Baumann's record in the 100 freestyle -- a record that was set back in the early 1980s."

"Duthie has been plagued by injuries but he is really getting on a roll."

The pair will team with Graham Wood and Tom Gaschler for a 4-x-50-metre relay team that undoubtedly will challenge for the NAIA record as well.

SFU also won the women's title last year and is favoured to do so again, led by junior Lisa Huffman, who captured three gold medals at last year's championships.

The meet runs today through Saturday with preliminaries starting each day at 11 a.m. and finals going each evening at 6 p.m.

Vikes vie for 2 titles

The UVic Vikings shoot for a sweep of Canada West men's and women's basketball titles this weekend when they play host to both best-of-three playoff finals.

The UVic women face the Calgary Dinos, a team they split with in early February in Victoria. The Vikings won 53-49, while the Dinos took a 67-49 decision.

Meanwhile, the UVic men play host to the Alberta Golden Bears, a team they swept in mid-February at home. UVic won 75-66 and 66-63.

The first two games of each set are Friday and Saturday, with 6:30 p.m. starts for the women and 8:15 p.m. tip-offs for the men. Third games, if necessary, would be Sunday, with time to be determined.