Nathan Lawkki  
Sports Staff

The top-ranked Alberta Golden Bears volleyball team will begin their quest for a third consecutive national title when they take the floor against their bitter provincial rivals from Calgary for a pair of weekend contests to open the Canada West season this weekend.

Coming off of four straight wins over American schools, including their Saturday evening victory over the Pac-10 Champion USC Trojans, the Bears will look to carry over their recent momentum into conference play. Alberta finished their exhibition schedule with an 11-0 mark and although their record may support the notion that they were unbeaten, this wasn’t the case. The Bears survived two intense five-set matches in the preseason, one of which was played against Calgary. As the champs, everyone will be gunning for the Bears in every match, including the Dinos. "Calgary is on the verge of becoming a veteran team. They have the experience of some five-year players and they have good size, so they will present us with a formidable test this weekend," head coach Andy Basham commented. Canada West is a tough conference, so going out and winning every night might not be as simple for the Bears. Therefore, Basham is trying to stress a little more inside his players to come out hungry and ready for action this weekend.

"We’re ready to go. We’re ready to play our hard and are trying to get some stability and feel comfortable in (various) areas," Basham said. As the Canada West Challenge, fifth-year senior Thomas Jerome played outstandingly in each match and teams, including our opponents, will have to be prepared to step up and contribute to a team with the highest of expectations. "Thomas is a good player and a very good athlete, but there are a lot of players who can carry different loads," Basham noted. "We had some guys, such as Tanner Nash, come off the bench on Saturday versus USC and do really good things."

Although the Bears are favourites to claim a third-straight national title, coach Basham doesn’t like to talk about championships until the opportunity arises.

In the end, you’d rather good enough, or you aren’t. In order to get good enough, there is a process that has to take place and that is the thing I am most concerned about.""The Bears will take the first two steps of this process against the Dinos when play begins at 8 p.m. on Friday and at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday at the MacEwan Gym.

EYE OPENER: Justin Merta (control) and Alberta hope to take a bite out of the Dinos. Click for photo.

Volley-Bears ready for title defence

Inch set to chase major league dream

Evan Dried  
Sports Editor

Essays and exams are just a few of the things that come to mind when thinking about the life of a university student, but few have to think about their 91 mph fastball in between writing term papers and studying for those coveted mid-term exams.

It’s the reality of things for Philadelphia Phillies draft choice and 0-0 starter Steven Inch, who was selected in the sixth round of this year’s MLB First-year player draft back in June.

Inch, a Vanderhoof native, gained attention from pro scouts in large part thanks to his two years spent at the Vancouver Academy of Baseball in Vancouver, British Columbia.

After initially committing to attend the University of Kentucky in the second round of the 2012 Canadian Junior National Championships,深圳 was drafted by the Phillies and that decision of whether to sign with the organization or go to Kentucky and play NCAA baseball with the Wildcats.

"I wasn’t expecting to go as high as 10. I didn’t know if I was going to be drafted or not, but I was pretty confident that I wanted to go to school. University seemed like something I really wanted to do, and to be a part of NCAA athletics was a pretty big deal to me," Inch explained.

A veteran of both Team Alberta and Team Canada at various tournaments, Inch has been guided in his baseball career by his older brother, Kevin, whose love for the game has been infectious.

"I don’t think I would have liked baseball if it wasn’t for him. When he was about 12, he found me a baseball and I’ve always pretty much followed him in everything that I’ve done.

The 6-4 right-hander will be taking classes in the fall semester while continuing his training regimen before heading off to spring training with the Phillies in Florida, where he will report to the Phillies.

"It’s interesting balancing two full jobs with school and training for professional baseball," Inch remarked.

With his first spring training on the horizon, Inch understands it already building for the chance to work on his baseball career full-time.

"I am really excited to spend a full year, and kind of see what I can actually accomplish," Inch said. "Work with me is a big thing — I don’t think I’d be where I am if baseball hadn’t given me the work ethic to do well. I am competing against every guy on my team and no one is going to have it easy. It’s about getting better every day and working hard to get the best out of every day."

Inch is looking to impress at spring training come March.