

## COLLEGE HOCKEY

# Crusaders facing must-win weekend for playoff chances

By LARRY FISHER Feb 12  
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As president of the Okanagan College Crusaders, Kelly Loudoun can already call this season a success.

But as a player, Loudoun isn't satisfied just yet. He and his teammates still have their sights set on making the playoffs in their inaugural season in the seven-team B.C. Intercollegiate Hockey League.

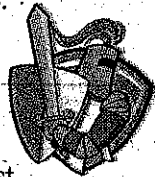
This weekend will go a long way in determining whether that goal becomes a reality for the expansion franchise, as the fifth-place Crusaders (8-10-2) host the second-place Thompson Rivers University Wolfpack of Kamloops (12-6-0) in their final homestand.

The two-game set goes tonight at 9:10 p.m. and Saturday at 6:30 p.m. at Winfield Arena.

"(Tonight) is going to be our most important game of the season," said Loudoun, whose Crusaders trail four-place University of Victoria (8-8-4) by two points for the final playoff spot with four games left in the regular season.

"If we win (tonight), we'll have some momentum for Saturday," Loudoun continued. "Right now, (University of Victoria's) destiny is kind of in their own hands, so we gotta get four points this weekend to really expect to make playoffs."

The Crusaders finish on the road against the last-place Selkirk Saints (1-18-1) in Castlegar, Feb. 27 and 28.



## Crusaders

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The top four teams plus host Trinity Western University qualify for next month's playoffs in Langley.

But Loudoun and the Crusaders aren't looking past tonight. Okanagan opened the campaign with 5-3 and 5-4 road losses to TRU in late September, and the two teams haven't matched up since.

"We're better than we were that first weekend, I can guarantee that," Loudoun said, "but TRU just came off two wins over (top-ranked Simon Fraser University), so it'll be a tough test.

"We weren't really the team we are now (in the initial meetings). When we're playing on the ball, we're one of the best teams in the league."

Off the ice, the Crusaders have also made significant strides. Loudoun said the team has been well received and supported at OC, and management is actively exploring ways to improve the product for next season.

"We've been getting a lot of positive feedback and community input," Loudoun said. "The school said it's been a success regardless of what happens. But at the end of the day, just from being a player, our objective is to make playoffs and win a championship.

"I wouldn't judge the success of the season necessarily on that, but it's something we're still aiming for and it'd make the season a lot better. But no matter what, we're going to be back for Round 2 next year."

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