

Titans Tumble Out of The Gate

By [Greg Meachem - Red Deer Advocate](#)

Published: May 25, 2009 8:45 AM



Red Deer Titan Kyle Kaus hangs onto the ball while being tackled by St. Albert's Liam Hutchinson on Saturday. Photo by Natasha Schmale/Advocate Staff

St. Albert RFC 59 Red Deer Titans 0

The Red Deer Titans first division men's rugby squad is down, but not out.

The Titans fell to 0-3 in Alberta Cup action Saturday, losing 59-0 to visiting St. Albert.

Despite the one-sided beating and earlier losses of 33-20 and 36-3, Titans first-year coach John Keepa insisted the team is staying positive.

"We have a good group of guys, a good mix of old and new, youthful players," said the New Zealand import. "But we're still trying to find a good balance where we can start performing.

"Today's game was a high-scoring game, but I'm still proud of the guys in the fact that we do well with the personnel that we have. There are expectations of players coming from overseas, but you don't bank on those. You just have to play with what you've got, with the cards that are dealt to you."

While the Alberta Cup team has struggled to be competitive this season, Keepa said he's stressing the importance of maintaining an upbeat attitude and the players are listening.

"The guys are doing really well. Like I told them at halftime, just keep your heads up and keep moving forward. You lose that mental battle once you start putting your head down," said the coach. "People talk about pressure from the opposition, but at the end of the day the pressure comes from yourself. It's about me coaching them to be mentally strong."

Keepa is from a rugby-mad country and admitted the calibre of the game in his homeland is "different" from what he's encountered during his first year in Canada.

"It's kind of what I expected," he said. "I spent seven months in the USA (as a guest coach) last year and that was a lower level as well. But there are some really great athletes here. I think the imports from different countries do help, but I also think that it's important that Canadian teams have their own strengths and eventually it would be great to have 100 per cent Canadian teams."

The Titans tutor is stressing an all-for-one style of play.

"The systems that we're employing, which we unfortunately didn't use today, is about sharing the workload," he said.

"We have different systems where the guys work together collectively as opposed to just one player doing all the work or the big guys doing all the work. We try and spread the workload because to me that's the most important thing.

"I'm trying to teach them to work systems as opposed to running willy-nilly like you see in high school and middle school rugby."

Keepa, 49, played with a senior team in New Zealand last year and was pressed into service Saturday. He also suited up with the Titans third division team earlier in the season.

"We could use more players, but like I've told the guys 'don't be despondent at anything because we're doing the best that we can with who we've got'."

The Titans third division team downed the Saracens 10-0 in Calgary Friday.