

A SPORTING CHANCE !!!

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Anybody with even a mild interest in hockey must have noticed one thing by now (I hope), the beginning of the University hockey season three weeks ago. Since the start of the season, there has been two stories circulating around the campus. The first is the amazing start of the St. Thomas Tommies, and the second is the dismal start of the UNB Red Devils. By the time this column goes to print, there will be another chapter added to that story with the outcome of Wednesday night's STU-UNB game, but that doesn't concern me yet. What does is the reason why the Devils are having such a rough time getting things in gear. Of course, if I had an outright answer to this question, you can bet that I wouldn't be writing this; instead I'd have a real job that paid me real money, but I can speculate on some of the reasons for the team's problems to date.

It's been well-documented that the key to winning is experience, a fact which was echoed two years ago when the Devils won the AUSA Championship with a team of experienced veterans mixed with a few new faces. This year, however, things are much different. The team now consists of a number of new faces mixed with a few experienced veterans. To be exact, there are 11 new faces in the Devils' lineup, and to top it off, there is a new face behind the bench. Initially, there is always a period of adjustment (you might say apprehension) when a new coach takes over a team with this many rookies in the lineup; I think their main problem has to do with the adjustment to the university caliber of hockey. Once the period of adjustment is over, I think this team will emerge out of their present slump and play the kind of hockey that they are capable of. As for when that will be, the best I can offer is the statement of winger John LeBlanc. According to LeBlanc, "we are starting to come together as a team. Both off ice and on ice we seem to be a together team, actually; I think a lot more than last year." For your sake, I hope you're right, John.

Since the season started three weeks ago, the Devils have not really been "out of" any hockey game per se. The Devils have played four hockey games to date (by the time this goes to print, it will be five) and it's not easy to say that they had absolutely no chance of winning the game. Even in the game last Saturday against the powerful Moncton Blue Eagles, UNB had a chance of at least tying Moncton up until the last two minutes of the game. The problem for the Devils, since the onset of the season, has been giving the puck away in their own zone. After Saturday's contest, coach Doug MacLean commented that "our giveaways were way down today, but there was three crucial ones that cost us goals." Well, if you know that it's giveaways that are costing goals and ultimately hockey games, there must be a way to solve the problem quickly and easily, right? Says MacLean, "we've worked hard in every game and we've lost three of them, but we could have easily won two or three. We've gotta keep working at it; that's all we can do." For your sake, I hope you're right, Doug.

This weekend, the Devils take to the road once again, and you can be guaranteed that the only thought in their minds is to come home with two wins under their belts and put to rest all of those rumors and stories floating about the campus. According to MacLean, the one thing the Devils can't be criticized for this season is lack of desire because "as a coach,



you ask for 100 percent, and I don't think there's too many guys out there not giving it for me." With this in mind, the UNB Red Devils head for Halifax to take on the St. Mary's Huskies and the Dalhousie Tigers with the purpose of setting the record straight and

squashin all those rumors about the only spot they're assured of in the standings in the basement. As for my opinion, well, let's just say that it's too early to tip my hand because after all, anything is possible ... WITH A SPORTING CHANCE !!!!

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