

Raiders miss playoffs

by Dave Mombourquette

Let's go back to November for a minute. The Red Raiders are riding a six game winning streak, and appear to be heading for their best season in recent memory, when it happens. What seems to be a minor foot injury to forward Chris McCabe, starts off an avalanche of illness and injury which continues to grow until the Raiders playoff hopes are finally buried under the assault.

The men's basketball squad was put in the tomb two weeks ago, losing 86-71 and 95-89 to the PEI Panthers, and 78-72 to the Mt. Allison Mounties. The desperately thin Raiders found no refuge from the season long carnage, losing guard Ken Ames to the chicken pox before the Island series, and then having forward Don McCormack go down with an ankle injury in the first game. The Raiders had needed at least a split of the series with PEI to ensure a playoff berth and when this did not materialize, the disheartened and decimated team was upset by the Mt. A squad.

One thing is certain though, the team didn't go down without a fight. A fight wasn't enough in the Friday game as the Panthers charged out to a 48-25 half time lead, and coasted the rest of the way, with the final score 86-71. The Panthers were led

by Bill Redmond with 26 points and Chris Sumner who added 22. Scott Devine hooped 24 points for the Raiders to go along with 17 from Chris McCabe.

The Raiders were never in the game, as they clearly missed the experience of Ken Amos, who fell ill with the chicken pox just days before the game. On top of that Don McCormack sprained his ankle, and was left pretty well ineffective for the rest of the game.

Having to go with only seven players the next day, the prospects were not very good. Then Don Nelson played his trump card. The previous night he had suited up Paul Holder, the former starting centre, who was supposed to be out for the season with a bad leg. Paul didn't see the floor that night, but on Saturday everyone in the building, especially UPEI, knew he was back. With Holder controlling the inside, the Raiders were able to close down a good portion of the Panther offense, and opened up their own attack.

The Raiders were awesome in the early going, pulling out to a 43-22 lead with only 12 minutes gone in the half. A late spurt by the Panthers allowed them to close out the half down 57-47, but the Raiders were still in control. Chris McCabe was the big gun for the locals, scoring 19

points and doing an excellent defensive job on Chris Sumner. The Panthers were carried by Bill Redmond who found the range for 16 first half points.

It was this same type of performance which continued in the second half, as Redmond's radar shooting upped his total to 37 points to go along with an excellent defensive showing. The Panthers quickly erased their 10 point halftime deficit, and the game was close the rest of the way. The big men on the Island team improved in the second half, but it was the outside shooting of Redmond that carried the day.

Associate Coach Phil Wright accepted the result, in light of the physical condition of his troops. "The guys were very disappointed, we played so well in the first half and couldn't hold it," said Wright.

Chris McCabe ended up with 25 points for the Raiders, while Scott Devine added 23. Chris felt that the team did a great job in the game; and that looking back, "I couldn't be disappointed with the team we had on the floor." The fact the team included only two of the teams original starters, sums it up quite well.

The end of another season has come, but the Raiders promise to be back in shape next year and giving it another run for the title.

Free Throws

By DAVID MOMBOURQUETTE

"Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." if you happen to be an ardent Red Raiders supporter, then the above message is for you. Yes, it's hard to believe, but the season is over for the men in red and black, and the bottom line is a 7-9 record and an early trip to the side lines.

The Raiders finished the season with a pair of losses to the PEI Panthers, and a final insult at the hands of the lowly Mount Allison Mounties. You can't blame the guys for trying though, and they tried harder than any other team in the conference, using determination and hustle to overcome monumental injury problems.

Remember the injury situation? Well as a final recap of what has to be the most injury plagued season any sports team has had to suffer we can begin with final two games against PEI. The already thin squad had to do battle without starting guard Ken Amos who fell ill with the chicken pox, and then to top it all off, Don McCormack, the only starter to be healthy for every game, twisted his ankle and missed the final two starts. Add to this the departures of Paul Holder, Dwight McInnis and Gerard Whelan, the hospitalization of key players Ted De Winter and Chris McCabe, the early season leg injury of Dale Kozak, a severe bout with the flu by Scott Devine, and an assortment of other nagging injuries, and you end up with a team that should have been resigned to a total write off of a season. The fact that the Raiders came within an eyelash of making the playoffs says more about the heart of this team than I can, so I'll leave their performance at that.

Gutsy performance of the week goes to Paul Holder, for his contribution in the second PEI game. Paul was supposedly out for the season with his leg injury, but suited up when Ken Amos became ill, and played after Don McCormack was injured. Despite a still painful leg, the big guy had quite the game, scoring 13 points and controlling the boards in the first half before tiring. If his brief appearance is any indication, Mr. Holder could be a terror in the AUAA next season.

Once again a member of the Red Raiders has been chosen athlete of the week, the honour going this week to Chris McCabe. The classy 6'5" forward, from Yonkers, New York was a major factor in the Raiders almost defeating the UPEI Panthers two weeks ago. Chris scored 25 points in the game and did an excellent defensive job on Island forward Chris Sumner. It has been a rough year for Chris, but when he has been healthy enough to play, the performances have been impressive.

The records continue to be left in the wake of the performance of Scott Devine. The team captain and floor leader added the single season scoring record to his already impressive list of accomplishments, scoring 647 points to dethrone former Raider Dave Nutbrown in the UNB record books. Although Scott has picked up his share of awards, they only begin to show his importance to the team. The fact that Scott will be back for his fifth year next season, should make for some uneasy coaches in the conference.

Seeing as the season is now over, this will be the year's last appearance for the column. Any comments you have will be greatly appreciated, as I hope to be back next year and wouldn't want to mess up two years in a row.

I would like to thank coaches Don Nelson, Phil Wright and Joe Dunn, and all of the guys on the team for their cooperation with the stories and the column. It was a rough season, but wait until next year!



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