

Sink or swim: Yeomen learning the water polo ropes



John Bonin

by Riccardo Sala

A big splash: A young York squad defends against Waterloo.

A rookie team cannot measure its status in terms of the win column. It has to look for the small victories; points earned amidst defeat and experience that teaches and leads them up the ladder of success.

For that reason, the water polo Yeomen's 13-5 loss to the visiting Waterloo squad last Wednesday night was not a bitter defeat. This was York's second game of the season, the first being an away game also against Waterloo that the Yeomen lost 18-16.

Before the match, York's coach Trevor Man talked extensively about his squad and its lack of experience. "We're a very young

team," he said, "with a sport that is very foreign to a lot of our players, most of whom are in their first year of university, playing a game that is generally not offered in high school.

"We have five returning players out of a team of 13, the other eight players have never played water polo before in their lives," he added.

Before the game, all the players lined up to have their fingernails checked and, if necessary, trimmed. York took to the water wearing the blue caps, while Waterloo opted for the white caps.

The first quarter saw the York squad goaltending in the deep-

end. The Yeomen pushed off to an aggressive start, and with 3:04 left in the seven-minute quarter, York's Mike Rahal lofted a shot into the Waterloo net to give York the lead. Third year player John Bonin followed up Rahal's goal with one in 2:46 left to play to give York a 2-0 lead.

Unfortunately the two point lead was illusory and fleeting. A scant half minute later, a renewed Waterloo offence scored. Then, with 0:00 on the clock, Waterloo's Greg Baldwin dramatically tied the game with a long shot.

Waterloo dominated the second quarter, making Yeoman goaltender Josh Deutch the victim of

four unanswered goals. The Yeomen struggled defensively against the well organized Waterloo offence which kept the ball out of the range of the York defenders before finding a hole and rushing in to score. At the end of that miserable second quarter, the score stood at 6-2 for the bad guys (Waterloo).

The Yeomen remained upbeat despite the score when they took to the water for the third quarter. At the forefront was the team's captain Ross MacDonald, a veteran who exhibited a flurry of activity in the water, constantly shouting and directing the action like an aquatic Napoleon who unfortu-

nately was going to meet his Waterloo.

The momentum that had propelled Waterloo through the second quarter remained throughout the third quarter and accounted for another six points on the score board. York answered belatedly at 3:28 with a goal from Mike Hickstein which was little consolation as the Yeomen ended the quarter behind 12-3.

The fourth quarter for the Yeomen was like a ninth inning for the Blue Jays where they would try to catch up like crazy, hitting the homeruns that they should have hit three innings earlier. In the fourth quarter, the Yeomen started to meld, and some of the aggression that had pushed them ahead for a while in the first quarter returned.

Yeoman Wayne Carrigan scored first and John Bonin followed up his first period goal with one at 0:54 to push the Yeomen up to five. Waterloo also added to its score in the fourth and closed out their second win over the young York squad.

"The veterans played disappointingly, their concentration and shooting were missing . . . most of our young guys were excited about playing at home for the first time and couldn't control themselves," said Man after the game.

"I hope it's an off performance. We're looking for a better showing on October 28 when we play here at home in a tournament," he added.

Man conceded that making the OUAA finals at the end of November is very doubtful following his team's second loss out of two matches. "The season will likely end November 12 for us since only the top four of nine teams make it to the provincials."

Last year the team placed sixth out of nine teams on the Ontario circuit, beating out Carleton, RMC and Queen's.

Looking at the water polo team in the short term, it is easy to get discouraged. But the team is in the process of rebuilding and the loss of nine players last year will not be a loss easy to work around.

Man is very optimistic though. The bulk of his rookies are first year students, and if these players stay with York and with the team through the four or five years of university, the rookies of today can be the champions of tomorrow.

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