

Acadia puts hockey banner out of reach for Dal

BY EUGENIA BAYADA

Another year, another heartache. The Acadia Axemen eliminated the hockey Tigers from the AUAA playoffs for the seventh consecutive year last Friday. Acadia beat Dal 4-0 in the series opener on Wednesday and 2-1 on Friday to sweep the Tigers 2-0 in the division semifinals.

"It just wasn't meant to be," says senior forward Mark Alexander. "We came up against a hot goaltender and we just couldn't score. It was a good ending to a rollercoaster year — everyone gave everything they had."

"I would've liked to get past Acadia this year, my last year — we've lost to them every year in the four years that I've been at Dalhousie."

That sentiment was reflected by a few of Dal's senior players. This was supposed to be Dal's year, and Dal easily had the best team, at least on paper.

"It's rather obvious that our lack of scoring was our achilles heel all season," says assistant coach Kim Houston. "[The team's loss] was not necessarily from a lack of effort."

"A great team effort — a successful failure, I guess. I'm disappointed just in the outcome, not in the way that we played. We outshot them every time," adds Tiger veteran Pat Russell. "I think we deserved to win the series."

Dal overcame a number of obstacles on the way to playoffs. Specifically, Houston notes the loss of senior forward Marc Warner in the season's final game due to "that vicious knee injury" and the return of goaltender Neil Savary to the starting line-up. Warner suffered significant damage to his left knee during Acadia's Feb. 22 visit to Memorial Arena, following a dubious check by Mike O'Leary. Review of the game tape resulted in a two-game suspension for the Axeman winger. Savary overcame a back injury which had sidelined him for several weeks to get back in the game.

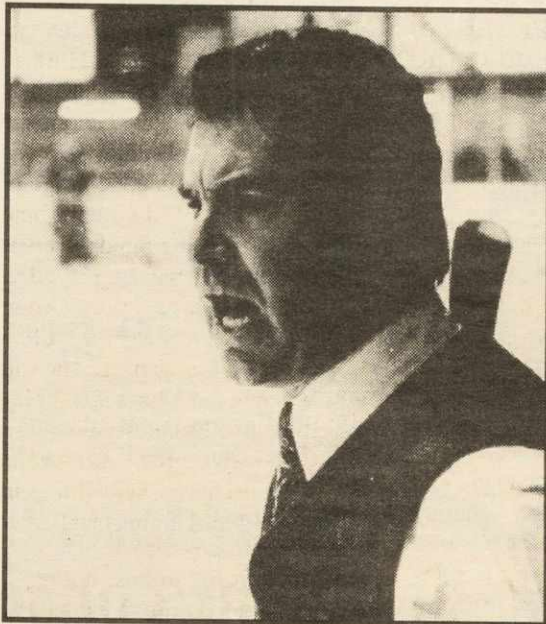
"Neil came off his injury and performed well up to expectations,"

notes Houston.

At Acadia Arena, the Tigers came out stronger in the first period, exhibiting solid defense both in their own end and in the neutral zone, yet the frame remained scoreless. The second period went much the same way, with the Tigers backchecking and forechecking effectively to keep Acadia from scoring, until building tension and

on their team, the residence and Tiger Pride fans who had previously made their presence known were noticeably absent. So much for the home advantage.

"Last year we got past X because of the crowd support," notes Alexander. "This year you could've heard a pin drop when the Acadia fans weren't yelling."



Head Coach Darrell Young. (Photo by Ryan Lash)

In fact, Alexander and Jody Shelley, obviously frustrated at the Tigers' silent crowd, even attempted to wake the Dal fans up as they prompted them with a few chants. Their efforts, for the most part, went unrewarded as any burst of energy was shortlived.

"It was great to hear chants for the Dalhousie hockey team, even though they faced tough competition from the Acadia crowd," adds senior defenceman Richard Ujvary,

somewhat diplomatically.

Dal hockey came to play and outshot, outplayed and outchanced the Axemen yet were once again kept at bay by Amundrud. The Tigers combined the defence exhibited during the series-opener with strong offense, outshooting Acadia an impressive 41-17.

Jeff Mercer put the Axemen on the board at 8:40 of the second frame and scored again at 2:02 of the third. Though Dal dominated the final period and outshot the visiting team 16-4, Amundrud's winning streak carried through. Dal captain Dave Haynes finally managed to put his team on the board as he put a rebound into the net with just 31 seconds left in the game. The Tigers' momentum could have resulted in another goal yet the Acadia blueline managed to clear the puck a couple of times to once more put the

obviously played with a lot of pride and passion," notes head coach Darrell Young.

"When all is said and done, we didn't leave anything to doubt. We played two very solid games — it was the first time all year that we did that back-to-back."

"Every one of them can hold their head up high," says Houston, adding that it is an unfortunate end to the university career of those players who are graduating this year.

With 13 players still in their freshman or sophomore years, a solid core can be expected to return to the team next season.

"The guys who played key roles for us are all eligible to return next year and that's very positive. Hopefully they'll learn from a little experience," says Young.

"You can't keep saying that it might happen next year. [Former Tiger] Kevin Meisner said that to us in our first year — that you can't wait until your last year [to win]," concludes Alexander.

'97-'98 season

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Chris Pittman	12-13-25
Martin LaPointe	7-18-25
Ted Naylor	7-17-24
Derrick Pyke	9-14-23
Tim Hill	11-9-20
Dave Haynes	10-10-20
Chad Kalmakoff	10-10-20
Jody Shelley	6-11-17
Craig Whynot	5-9-14
Trevor Doyle	2-8-10
Marc Warner	5-3-8
Luke Naylor	3-4-7
Mark Alexander	4-2-6
Richard Ujvary	0-6-6
Dallas Gray	3-2-5
Pat Russell	0-5-5
Dave Bourque	1-3-4
Shane Gibbs	0-3-3
Jamie Henderson	1-1-2
Jason Pellerin	1-1-2
Jason Wolfe	1-1-2
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