

SPORTS

Oh well...there's always next year...

by Riccardo Sala

Wanted: miracle worker who knows football and can help the Yeomen.

Unfortunately, there aren't many miracle workers, at least those who could have helped the Yeomen.

This became very clear over the course of the season with the football Yeomen. A pre-season victory at McMaster evaporated into a winless regular season. Their last game was a 64-0 thumping at the hands of Western.

Coach Tom Arnott is no miracle worker.

This was his first year with the Yeomen, and in many ways what he discovered came as a rude shock.

"I've probably learned more about coaching this year than in my 11 years at Guelph and Laurier," said Arnott.

A similar learning curve also occurred at the University of Waterloo. With 33 straight losses the Warriors hired Dave Knight as their new head coach in 1988 to turn the program around.

A coach at Laurier for 19 years and the Argos director of player personnel for four more before he came to Waterloo, Knight was in the same boat as Arnott.

For both York and Waterloo the hiring of new coaches echoed renewed support for football

when the program seemed in danger of being abandoned by the administration.

Knight cleaned up the house, hiring coaches that he knew were going to believe in his system and work hard.

That season, Waterloo won four games and went to the OUAA finals.

Knight was sidelined with a heart attack at the beginning of this year and had to stay away from the team, but the results of his restructuring spoke for themselves.

"First of all we had to show them what it takes to have a successful program," Knight said. Hard work and dedication. "Probably the most difficult thing we had to do was to convince (the team) that they could win," Knight said.

Arnott's first season hasn't been characterised with the neat transition from a losing to winning team that marked Knight's first season. Knight had more time to prepare for his first season.

Though Arnott, like Knight, took a wrecking ball to his coaching staff, looking for "loyalty, ability to teach and knowledge, (in that order)," there wasn't much he could do with the players.

The morale problem that has afflicted the Yeomen for a long time didn't disappear with Arnott's appearance.



Emmanuel Papachristou

"Last year I didn't really know what to expect until I came on the (York) field during spring training and found only 17 players," Arnott said comparing this turnout with Laurier where 60 or so would show up.

Many players left during the course of the season. Arnott was usually good-natured during conversation, except when the topic turned to the issue of the 30 or so players who quit.

"There were two groups of people," Arnott said, "the clowns who left and the players who stayed 'til the end of the year."

Many veterans deserted, the net result was a team that was

composed largely of rookies by the end of the season.

In their season ending finale against Western, Arnott only had 37 players. Ten other Yeomen were out with injuries.

"We weren't even playing with first stringers," Arnott explained.

"We were terribly mismatched. Going into the game we didn't stand a chance and it's a terrible feeling. I would rather be beaten 64-0 with the team I had at the end of the year than lose by a much smaller margin with the players that left," Arnott said.

Arnott knows that his team is not the most talented. Asked when he thinks that they will have

a winning season Arnott can only say "the sooner the better."

"We weren't rebuilding this year, we took a wrecking ball to the team," Arnott said. "We have to take a look at everything from the most minute details of administration to the most minute details of our football play."

In the meantime, all we can do is wait.

When York hired Tom Arnott they weren't looking for somebody who could walk on water. Just somebody who could make the Yeomen winners. The question remains though, which is more difficult?

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