

Varsity Reds Soccer: This year the playoffs, next year...

MEGHAN NESBIT

THE BRUNSWICKAN

With only two years of Varsity status and competition in the AUA, one might assume the Varsity Reds Women's soccer team might not be as competitive in the AUA as some more experienced teams. This is an assumption that is dead wrong. This year, the women of the soccer team have proven that they are one of the strongest contenders in the AUA, and they are only getting stronger.

The success of the soccer team this year is truly astounding when you examine how young the team is. This year, even the senior players only had 1 year of AUA experience with UNB behind them. Furthermore, of the 20 member team, 12 were rookies, 6 of whom were starters. Senior Leslie Hachey was impressed with the level of play by the rookies. She felt the rookies brought "joy and excitement" to the team as well as enthusiasm and hard work. The young age of the team obviously did not interfere with the ability of the Reds to be an extremely competitive team in an equally competitive conference.

This year, UNB finished its regular season with an impressive record of 7 wins, 3 ties, and 2 losses. The Reds were the top scoring team in the league with 30 goals, and were third best defensively with only 7 goals scored against them. One major contributor to the team's high scoring record would have to be Leslie Hachey. Leslie was the league's top goal scorer with 12 goals. She also won an AUA all-star, and was named as a first team All Canadian. Michelle Raymond also won an AUA all-star.

From the defensive side of things, one has to look at goaltender Karlene Bishop. Coach Miles Pinsent commented that Karlene "...continues to improve. She is one of the best



Karlene Bishop in action earlier this year.

goaltenders in the league." Hachey agreed that Karlene is an, "excellent goaltender" resulting from her consistency and very hard work. But the true strength in the women's soccer team is not found in just one or two players, but in the overall strength of all of its players.

Pinsent attributes much of the team's success to its depth. There is a strong defensive, half-back, and forward line. Moreover, the bench is extremely strong. Pinsent pointed out that he could put 2-3 players in for any position with confidence that each player could get the job done. Injured players could be rested until they were back to 100% because there was great skill on the bench, ready to fill in.

One of the reasons the Reds were as developed and skilled as they were was because of the entire team's strong work ethic. Pinsent stated, "There was a huge improvement this year. Practices were intense and it paid off when we played the big teams."

As well, there is a lot of team unity amongst the members of the women's soccer team. Leslie remarked, "Our team

this year really clicked on and off the field." The women were able to work together very well this year, making the depth of the team that much stronger.

Going into the AUA championships this year, the Reds were in third place. In the first round they had a disappointing loss to St. Mary's. After 90 minutes of regulation play followed by two 15 minute over times, the score was still tied at 1-1. It went down to a shoot out and St. Mary's scraped out a victory of 4-3 against the Reds.

Though the team was disappointed, Hachey remarked, "We win as a team, and we lose as a team." Through both, the soccer team represented UNB impressively.

If next year's team improves as much as this year's team has, the women's soccer team will be even more successful than it already is today. Hachey commented, "It was a great season for everyone. We had some hard luck, but we'll be back stronger than ever next year." Hachey added, "women's soccer is going somewhere, and it's going somewhere fast." Based on the team's success already, this is easy to believe.

NEIL DUXBURY

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Some people say that defense wins championships. While this isn't commonly heard around soccer fields, the Varsity Reds men's soccer team had to follow that path through their '96 campaign.

"We had a good season defensively, as we only had 9 goals scored against us," summarised UNB's head coach, Gary Brown. Anchoring the defense were veterans Ben LeBlanc, Kamal Gurung and CIAU All-Canadian goalkeeper, Mike Green.

The offense was only a little less stingy, scoring 13 during the 13 game season. Brown attributed this to the time required to remould the forward line after the loss of last year's offensive firepower.

In a season seemingly dominated by character testing road trips, the Reds were often able to get results when it mattered most. During the first weekend of the season they faced both eventual AUA finalists in back-to-back games worth double points and tied both Acadia and Dalhousie 0-0. On a Friday to Sunday trip through Mount Allison, Moncton and PEI, again they came back with a split of the points.

More importantly, when they went to Newfoundland on the last weekend of the regular season with a playoff berth on the line, they took 3 of 4 points and grabbed the 4th of 6 playoff spots. The next weekend it was the same situation, away from home with the season itself on the line as they travelled to Dalhousie for the AUAs. Their first round opponents, the UPEI Panthers were a robust team, similar to the one the Reds had defeated the week before.

Neither team was able to make a mark on the scoreboard during the regulation 90 minutes. It was the same story for 30 minutes of extra time. As play continued on to make up for injury stoppages PEI finally settled the affair when a Panther went end-to-end to score the lone goal of the game, as penalty shots loomed.

"We gave everything for 90 minutes and extra time and to come out losers at the end was a big disappointment," said Kamal Gurung.

"I think we would have won on penalty shots," said coach Brown, basing his judgement on goalkeeper Green's performance against penalties earlier in the year.



Mike Green in action at Chapman Field.

PAT FITZPATRICK PHOTO

Brown seemed pleased that his team had made it as far as the playoffs. "To go that far with a young team...we were really pleased," he said.

"The way [the rookies] matured and played together as a team within a season." Both he and Gurung placed the development of the young players on the team as the high point of the year. Particularly notable was Mike Giudice who scored three goals over the last four games of the season.

After wholesale losses last year, the Reds have the lesser offseason task of replacing Blair Tucker, Rhea LeBlanc

and first time AUA all-star Kamal Gurung.

"It feels great to be recognised for the effort you put in," said Gurung of his award. He downplayed the importance of it in the overall scheme of things, "It's a team sport. That's all that matters to me."

Coach Brown considers the progress made by the rookies to be a significant step towards rebuilding the program. "It usually takes a couple of years for the team to gel. We'll be very good contenders if the recruiting goes as planned," Brown concluded.

INTRAMURAL SPORTS: MEN'S OUTDOOR SOCCER

Congratulations to the Jones House Lounge Lizards who beat out the Disbandits in the final round of the competitive tournament. Jones House won the game with a score of 1-0 to become this year's tournament champs!!!

RINGETTE

Ringette New Brunswick will be holding a National Team Player identification Camp in Fredericton, December 28 and 29 1996. To be eligible to participate, athletes must be female and be born on or before December 31, 1981. Interested individuals must contact one of the following camp co-ordinators no later than December 6, 1996: Keith Williamson, 459-8551; Jane Marshall, 622-7017; Paul Pineau, 858-5485.

NOTICE

DR. PERRY AMOS

OPTOMETRIST

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