

Photo by Jenn S

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL RESULTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24
UCCB 0 @ Dal 3 (15-10, 15-4, 15-0)
 SATURDAY, JANUARY 25
UCCB 0 @ Dal 3 (15-2, 15-5, 15-7)
 TUESDAY, JANUARY 27
Dal 3 @ Acadia 1 (13-15, 15-2, 15-10, 15-1)

Shattered NHL dreams

The fine line between hockey stardom and life-long disability

BY DARRYL OSBORNE

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Troy is an 18-year-old junior hockey player taking part in his first Memorial Cup. National Hockey League scouts are scattered throughout the capacity crowd. Troy knows that if he has a strong game and impresses them, he could dramatically increase his chances of being drafted and becoming an instant millionaire at next summer's NHL entry draft.

With less than a minute left in regulation time and the game tied at three, Troy finds himself slightly ahead of an opposing player as he races to try and prevent his team from getting called for icing the puck. Just before he touches the puck, the opposing player places his stick between Troy's skates, causing him to trip and slide face-first into the boards.

Troy lies motionless for several minutes. He keeps saying that he cannot feel his arms or legs. As the minutes continue to pass with no sign of movement, a hush falls over the once-boisterous crowd and players from both teams surround the young man with grave concern. His spine has been damaged. In one split second, Troy has gone from a budding NHL superstar to a quadriplegic.

In Canada, hundreds of athletes annually fall victim to debilitating spinal cord injuries. While medical advances and new technologies promise hope for spinal cord patients, the best defence against a life confined to a wheelchair is common sense and fair play.

According to Charles Tatter, a neurosurgeon who teaches at the University of Toronto, approximately 20 per cent of all spinal cord injuries suffered in Canada are sports-related, and 85 per cent of those victims are males between the ages of 18 and 24. The results of an injury to the spinal cord are often devastating, leaving people paraplegic or quadriplegic.

Paraplegia is a paralysis of the lower extremities and part or all of the trunk muscles. There is often a loss of sensation in paralysed limbs as well as muscle spasms, pain and loss of bowel and bladder control. Quadriplegia occurs when there is damage to the spinal cord in the upper back or neck region. Such injuries often cause impairment to the hands and arms, in addition to the effects associated with paraplegia.

When a person suffers a spinal cord injury, they may sustain a complete or incomplete injury. A complete injury occurs when the victim cannot move his or her body beyond the point of damage, while people with an incomplete injury maintain limited function in the affected body parts.

There have been medical advances that can minimize the amount of permanent damage caused by a spinal injury. The drug methylprednisone provides neuro-protection, increases blood flow and prevents calcium build-up within the victim. It must, however, be administered within eight hours of the injury if it is to be effective and the drug has substantial side effects.

"The rate of serious infection is significantly higher. In fact, it doubles," explains Michael Fehlings, associate professor of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto. "But we accept that as a worthwhile trade-off because [methylprednisone] results in improved function of nerve cells."

There have also been advances in rehabilitation for spinal cord injury victims, partly as a result of early treatments like methylprednisone.

"Rehabilitation for people is becoming increasingly complex. The reason for that is that some of the acute management is having a positive effect," says Molly

Varrier, chairperson of rehabilitation sciences at the University of Toronto. "We are finding that people are having increased movement, but at the same time also having increased muscle tone and spasticity."

Halo stabilization is one of the more recent improvements to the rehabilitation process for spinal injury patients. It involves the placement of a ring on the patient's head, which is then attached with screws to cross bars connected to a vest. The halo allows victims of spinal cord injuries to become mobile at a much faster rate.

There have also been substantial improvements made to the protective value of sports equipment, but Fehlings cautions that there is no one piece of equipment that will fully protect against a neck injury.

"[Children] are trying to emulate the NHL players. They have their helmet and face-mask, they look like Arnold Schwarzenegger, yet they have these tiny neck muscles and there is hitting from behind," he said.

This reality has led to the creation of an innovative program in the Novice Windsor Minor Hockey Association (NWMHA), which aims to prevent spinal injuries by discouraging hitting from behind.

All players, parents and coaches involved with the league are now required to sign a Fair Play Pledge, which prohibits players from hitting others from behind. In addition, all players must wear a three-inch STOP sign on the back of their jerseys.

Despite the fact that the age of players in the NWMHA ranges from four to nine, rules concerning hitting from behind are strictly enforced, says Kevin Stubbington, vice-president of the league and co-creator of the Safety Toward Other Players (STOP) program.

"We suspend our players for three games if they are caught pushing or shoving from behind. If they do it again, I cut them a check and send them home — they're done for the rest of the year. I don't want them in hockey if they can't play the game properly," Stubbington says.

Since the STOP program was introduced three years ago, 4,000 minor league hockey players in Windsor have stitched the STOP crest on their uniforms. Penalties for hitting from behind are rare and not a single player has suffered a spinal cord injury. Stubbington says he wants to see the program implemented widely.

"My goal is to see a STOP sign on every player," he asserted.

But Stubbington says he can't understand why the STOP signs are not more widely used.

"A lot of leagues have [adopted] the program, but those that haven't are probably sitting back waiting for some numbers, waiting for a graph, waiting for some results. All the time they are doing that, there are kids out there getting hurt every day."

There is currently no cure for spinal injuries — prevention remains the best cure. But advances in nerve regeneration research are providing hope. Tatter says he is optimistic about the possibility of regeneration of the human spinal cord in the not-so-distant future.

"There are several strategies that now work with animals... for example, we can transplant a piece of the spinal cord from one animal into another animal and have it actually grow, or we can take a nerve graph and place it in the gap of a spinal cord injury and the nerve graph will hook up with the stumps of the injured spinal cord," Tatter explains.

He adds that it is not unrealistic to think it will be available to injury victims by the turn of the century. But for now, the best hope is to play it safe.

Upcoming events

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan.31	Dal@SFX	8pm
Feb.6	Dal@SMU	8pm
Feb.8	UPEI@Dal	3pm
Feb.14	Dal@SFX	8pm
Feb.15	Dal@UCCB	3pm
Feb.19	ACA@Dal	8pm
Feb.22	SMU@Dal	8pm
Feb.27	Dal@UNB	8:30pm
Mar.1	UCCB@Dal	3pm
Mar.5	Dal@ACA	8pm

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Jan.31	Dal@SFX	6pm
Feb.6	Dal@SMU	6pm
Feb.8	UPEI@Dal	1pm
Feb.11	Dal@ACA	8pm
Feb.14	Dal@SFX	6pm
Feb.15	Dal@UCCB	1pm
Feb.19	ACA@Dal	6pm
Feb.24	SMU@Dal	6pm
Feb.27	Dal@UNB	6:30pm
Mar.1	UCCB@Dal	1pm
Mar.6	AUAAs@UPEI	
Mar.7	AUAAs@UPEI	
Mar.8	AUAAs@UPEI	

HOCKEY

Jan.31	UPEI@Dal	7pm
Feb.4	Dal@SMU	7:30pm
Feb.7	All-Star Game (@Metro Centre)	
Feb.11	SFX@Dal	7pm
Feb.14	Dal@UdeM	7pm
Feb.15	Dal@STU	2pm
Feb.18	SMU@Dal	7pm
Feb.22	ACA@Dal	7pm
Feb.27	Quarter Finals	
Feb.28	Quarter Finals	

SWIMMING

Feb.13	AUAAs@UNB	10:30 am & 6:30pm
Feb.14	AUAAs@UNB	10:30 am & 6:30pm
Feb.15	AUAAs@UNB	10am & 4pm
Feb.20	CIAUs@Sherbrooke	
Feb.21	CIAUs@Sherbrooke	
Feb.22	CIAUs@Sherbrooke	

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Jan.30	Dal@Laval Tournament	
Jan.31	Dal@Laval Tournament	
Feb.1	Dal@Laval Tournament	
Feb.13	AUAA League Tournament [UNB vs Dal]	8pm
Feb.15	AUAA League Tournament [MUN vs Dal]	noon
Feb.20	AUAA Championships (#2@#1, best 2 of 3)	
Feb.21	AUAA Championships (#2@#1, best 2 of 3)	
Feb.22	AUAA Championships (#2@#1, best 2 of 3)	
Feb.27	CIAUs@Calgary	
Feb.28	CIAUs@Calgary	
Mar.1	CIAUs@Calgary	

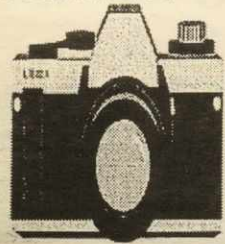
WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Jan.31	Dal@UNB	1pm
Feb.7	UPEI@Dal	6pm
Feb.8	UPEI@Dal	11am
Feb.11	Dal@SMU	7pm
Feb.14	MTA@Dal	5pm
Feb.15	UdeM@Dal	2pm
Feb.20	AUAAs@Dal	
Feb.21	AUAAs@Dal	
Feb.22	AUAAs@Dal	
Mar.5	CIAUs@Alberta	
Mar.6	CIAUs@Alberta	
Mar.7	CIAUs@Alberta	



Campus Copy
 & Computer Lab

PHOTOCOPYING
 FAXING
 BINDING
 LOCKER RENTALS
 PRESENTATIONS
 GRAPHICS
 COLOUR COPYING
 COLOUR LASER PRINTING
 SCANNING
 PRINTING



PHOTOFINISHING

3RD FLOOR, STUDENT UNION BUILDING
 6136 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
 DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, HALIFAX, N.S. B3H 4J2
 TEL: 494-3781 FAX: 494-5185
 EMAIL: campuscopy@dal.ca