

sports



Dalhousie Tiger defenceman Brian MacDonald is in his last year of university hockey. The assistant captain is a steady presence on the Tiger blueline.

PHOTO: FRANK MACEachern

The last year of a Dal career

by Andy Thompson

Hockey is, and always will be, an important part of Brian MacDonald's life.

The 25-year-old defenceman from Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, is in his fifth and final year of eligibility with the Dalhousie Tigers. He says he knows just how valuable hockey has been to him. He's used it to get an education.

"I think that, no question, that is probably the way to go now," says MacDonald. "You see a lot of people from this area playing Tier II and going down to the States. If you can use hockey as a means to get an education, that is the way to go."

MacDonald is now in his second year of pharmacy. While playing for the Halifax Junior "A" Lions and later with the Tigers, he received an honours degree in microbiology from Dalhousie.

He was 16 years-old when he moved from Port Hawkesbury to Halifax. It was the first time he was away from his home and his family. The first four years that he lived in the city he boarded with a Halifax family. He completed his last two years at St. Patrick's High School in Halifax.

He says he left home at a young age because he wanted to play high calibre hockey and at that time the opportunities weren't available at home. The Antigonish Bulldogs were still a junior "B" hockey team.

"Sixteen is a pretty young age to leave home," he says. "But I wanted to play hockey pretty bad and it seemed like the right thing to do at the time. If there was a (junior "A") team in Antigonish I would have probably stayed around."

Jim Bottomley coached MacDonald for four years when he played with the Lions and he says he knows that MacDonald was interested in doing well in school.

"He knew what his priorities were and he was very disciplined on and

off of the ice," says Bottomley of his former captain. "He was a good student and a good hockey player. If most guys had the type of dedication that he had and the heart that he played with, we would be winning every year."

MacDonald played on a winning team, in 1988, his final year with the Lions. But they narrowly lost out on the national title as the Notre Dame Hounds from Saskatchewan defeated the Lions in the final game of the Centennial Cup, the national Tier II championship.

He then joined the Dalhousie varsity hockey team.

Now, the second year of pharmacy student juggles the demands that go along with being a student-athlete.

"I think you have to be very disciplined and you have to make a lot of sacrifices," he says. "You have to learn how to manage your time. It can be done. It's challenging, but it's workable."

And during hockey season he is a busy man.

"We usually practice at 5:30 pm everyday for about an hour and after practice we lift weights," he says.

"And three mornings a week we have off-ice training at around 9:00 am."

"For most student-athletes the part of your life that suffers the most is your social life," says MacDonald.

At Dal, MacDonald is an assistant captain. He says he is a leader on the ice and tries to help out his younger teammates adjust to academics at university. MacDonald says because of the time he spends practising and playing hockey he has to work extra hard to maintain his 3.4 GPA.

"As one of the older guys on the team you try to let them know what you have been through academically," says MacDonald. "The first year or so for most hockey players attending university are adjustment

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Dal is hot, hot, hot!

Editor's Notebook

It's been a pretty good January for fans of the Dalhousie Tigers sports teams.

Leading the charge are the men's volleyball team and the hockey team.

The Al Scott coached v-ballers have an 8-0 record in conference play. They play against some of the best in the country this weekend at the Laval Tournament. Darrell Young's icemen went 9-0 in January and are breathing down the necks of the number one team in the Kelly Division, the Acadia Axemen.

Captain Kevin Meisner says there are a number of factors for the team's success.

"I don't think there is any one reason why we're playing so well. I

think that a lot of team work is involved. Darrell is playing four lines every night and everyone is playing real well so he can go to any guy he wants at any time and like I said everyone is pulling their own weight."

He says playing in front of the hometown fans has a lot to do with their winning ways.

"The thing about the second half last year and this year is that we played a lot of games at home, which helps a lot. When you're on the road a lot at the start of the year, it's hard to get any rhythm because you're never at home. School is kind of different, you still have to get your schooling done but now when you're at home everything kind of falls into place more than it does when you are away

all the time."

But the success goes beyond hockey and men's volleyball.

The men's basketball team are on a three-game winning streak as they try to earn a playoff berth and league title for outgoing coach Bev Greenlaw.

The women's basketball team are now tied for second with St. Francis Xavier. They easily rolled over UPEI last Sunday and look like a championship team.

The women's volleyball team had a tough Lawton's Volleyball Classic tournament but still hold down third place in the conference.

It's happy days for Tigers fans.

Dalhousie Athletes of the Week

* JENN PARKES *



WVB: 2 Wins

* 23 kills
(61% Efficiency)
* 4 serv. aces

Jan. 24 - 31/94

* JEFF MAYO *



MBB: 3 Wins

* 90 pts.
* Player of the
Game (3 times)

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Quote of the Week

"The thing about the second half last year and this year is that we played a lot of games at home, which helps a lot."

~ Kevin Meisner, Dal hockey captain about the teams winning streak.