

Zivic shines as Yeomen gymnasts grab zillionth (close) OUAA title

by Riccardo Sala

Going into the finals of the Ontario University Athletic Association gymnastics championships at York

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two Sundays ago, the Yeomen outnumbered their competitors by a wide

margin after the Saturday eliminations.

A margin that guaranteed another Ontario title for York, especially after one Western and two McMaster gymnasts opted out of the Sunday finals.

Led by York veteran George Zivic, who won three of the six individual gold medals Sunday, the Yeomen cleaned up almost all the medal positions on their unimpeded roll to a twenty first straight OUAA title.

Only three medals, a bronze for University of Toronto in the floor and

ring sections, and a gold for Toronto's Ken White on the pommel, fell within competitors' grasps.

The no-show of Western's Mike Inglis and Rob Doyle and Scott MacDonald of McMaster, the only gymnasts from either team who made it past Saturday's qualifying sections, guaranteed that at best the Sunday finals were to be a one-sided derby between York and UofT.

According to York coach Tom Zivic, the three gymnasts decided to scratch, rather than risk injury before the selections for the national team,

held one week later in Burlington.

"There's no question that their absence affected the Sunday finals. There's no question that George would not have won four gold medals (the three individual plus the one team medal)," Zivic added.

For Mike Cain, director of McMaster's gymnastics program (and former Yeoman), the absence of his two best gymnasts Sunday was a regrettable but nonetheless personal choice.

"Rob Doyle had stitches last weekend from a fall on his head, and Scott MacDonald had a triceps injury and competed at Queen's (the last tournament before the provincials) only to qualify for the OUAA championships," Cain said.

"I didn't really like it, but I don't have any control over it. Because they were injured I didn't push it. If they'd been healthy then we would have made a bit better showing," Cain added.

Cain conceded that even the presence of MacDonald and Doyle Sunday would not have kept the Yeomen from another Ontario title.

"York's got the depth. We need a third scorer. That's another reason why it didn't make that much difference (that Doyle and MacDonald

didn't compete). Next year we'll be much stronger," he explained.

For the Yeomen, little was required Sunday except that they show up. Led by George Zivic's gold medals in the rings, vault and parallel bar, York put on a solid performance.

The one dramatic moment came courtesy of Yeoman Colin Hood's fall in the parallel bars, a faux pas that momentarily scared the spectators and dropped him to last place in that competition.

It wasn't anything serious for Hood, who had only twisted his left shoulder and was well enough to continue onto the last event, the high bar, where he finished third behind Zivic and winner Mike Hood, his brother.

Following Zivic in the individual medal count was teammate JP Kraemer with four silver medals and a gold in the floor section.

"I'm superbly happy because we proved once again that we've built a team in spirit," York coach Tom Zivic said afterwards.

The next challenge for the Yeomen is the University Cup, in Calgary in several weeks time. This replaces the traditional Canadian Inter Athletic University championship for gymnastics, which passed away in 1986.

Olympian leads York to win at OWIAA finals

by Josh Rubin

Not bad for only eighty per cent capacity.

In only her second meet since recovering from a bout with mononucleosis, York gymnast and national team member Janine Rankin won all six gold medals she was eligible for.

Rankin's performance led the Yeowomen to their third consecutive OWIAA title at Tait McKenzie during reading week.

This time, thanks to Rankin and also some good health, the Yeowomen gave themselves a five point margin over the second place McMaster and Western squads. It must have seemed like a luxury compared to their tiny half point lead over McMaster when they won the Ontario title last year.

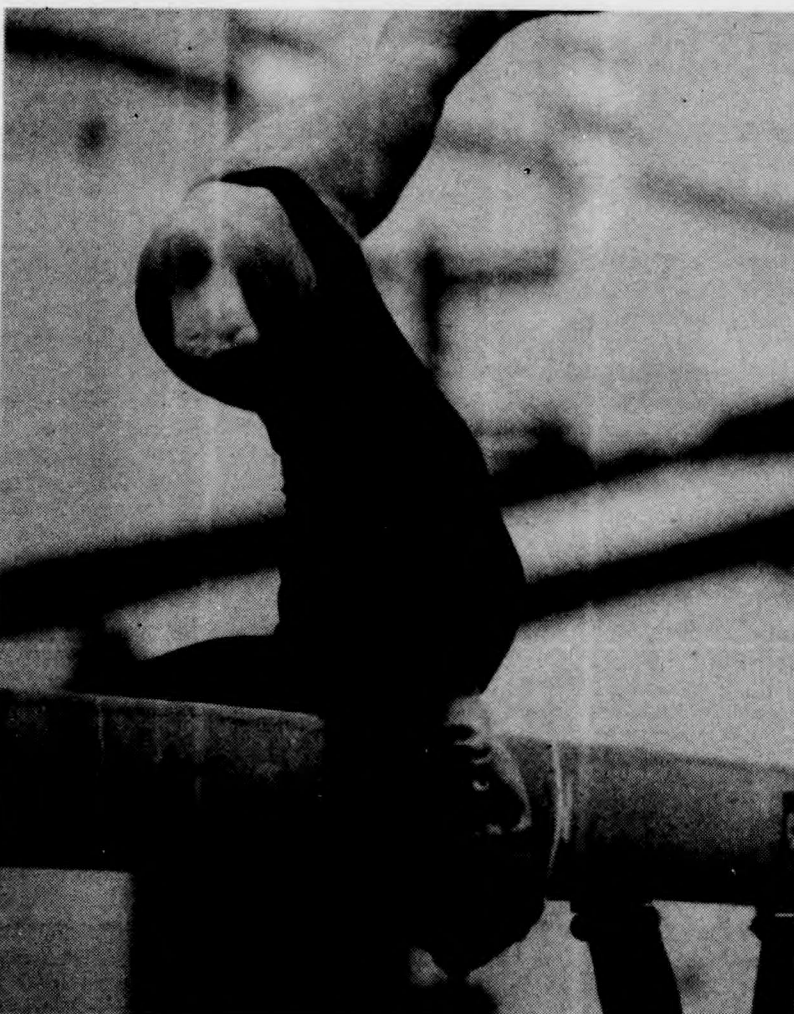
The win also marked York's seventeenth gymnastics title since the OWIAA began handing out championship banners in 1969, a string of which head coach Natassa Bajin and husband Boris are deservedly proud.

For golden-girl Rankin, who is a veteran of two world championships, this year's competition was also a chance to erase the memory of a second place all-round finish at her previous university meet.

"I should be winning at this level," said Rankin, who now must focus her energies on an upcoming national team training camp and the national university championships, which take place in Calgary in the second week of March.

Rankin's sparkling performance somewhat overshadowed a number of strong showings from other York athletes, in particular Trista Bernier, Stacey Umeh and team captain Rebecca Chambers.

Chambers, who at the time of last year's Ontario championships was hobbling around on a pair of crutches, placed third in the all-round competition and shared third spot with Umeh for her floor exercise.



ON THE BEAM-The Yeowomen gymnasts mounted a successful defence of their Ontario title led by Olympian and rookie Yeowoman Janine Rankin. Strong showings from Trista Bernier, Rebecca Chambers and Stacey Umeh guaranteed that York's success was across the board. photo by Clive Cohen

The effusive Umeh, meanwhile, also placed third in the vault competition while taking ninth spot all-round.

A gutsy showing from Trista Bernier allowed the 20-year-old North Bay sophomore to finish seventh all-round.

If at first that seems to be a bit of a slip from last year's All-Canadian performance in her rookie season, think again, said Boris Bajin.

"With people like Janine competing, of course her ranking's going to slip," said Bajin, who was also impressed with way Bernier came back to qualify for the floor and balance beam finals after a sub-par performance on the vault and uneven bars, usually her two strongest events.

"It shows she's becoming a much better all-round competitor," Bajin said.

Puck stops at Trois Rivieres as Yeomen end season with loss to Pats

by Josh Rubin

It was a task which, realistically, no one could have expected them to accomplish.

After losing the first game of their best two-of-three OUAA East semi-final against the defending national champions from UQTR (Université

de Québec a Trois Rivieres) 5-2, the Yeomen had to beat the Patriotes twice on the road in order to advance.

And despite a game effort from the York squad this past Saturday, they went down 6-3 in the first game at Trois Rivieres' Jean Talbot Arena to end the series.

In Saturday's loss, they followed the same pattern for the first game of the series, which took place at the Ice Palace the Thursday before.

Twice, the Yeomen played with as much effort as they could, and twice the Patriotes' superior skills proved too much to handle, also despite some more than solid netminding from veteran Willie Popp.

Thursday, the Yeomen closed the gap to 3-2 late in the second period, but a pair of Trois Rivieres goals in the final frame sealed the win for the Patriotes.

After Saturday's game before a packed house in Trois Rivieres, York coach Graham Wise said he was happy with the way his charges played, despite the final score.

"They put in 110 per cent against a talented team that was really pumped up. You can't be upset with that," said Wise, who also said he wouldn't be too surprised to see the Patriotes defend their national crown.

"They've got a lot of guys who know what it takes to win, and once they get that smell of success, you'd have to execute a perfect game to stop them," Wise added.

Some other keys in dumping the squad of Trois Rivieres coach Dany Dube, says Wise, are good goaltending, four solid lines and getting an early lead. Still, Wise added, "at this point in the season anything can happen."

York played with determination against both UofT and Queen's.

In the Tuesday match against Toronto, the Yeomen came out flying in the fourth set after losing two of the first three sets. In the fourth York took an early 9-4 lead, Toronto cutting the deficit to 9-8. The Yeomen pulled away to a 13-9 lead, opening the possibility of a fifth set.

York collapsed at this point, making a combination of unforced errors and falling prey to UofT's Marc Dunn.

Dunn had four kills for the Blues in a comeback which saw them score six unanswered points and win the set 15-13, and consequently the match.

The Queen's match was marked with a similar grit on the part of the Yeomen. Unfortunately, it ended it a similar fashion.

"We couldn't get into any flow against them (Queen's), probably because of our tough match against UofT," Dyba said.

Queen's came away with a three-set win to advance their post-season. For York, it was the end of the road.

One bright spot for the yeomen was the play of Adrain Adore. In his last season of play with York, the popular Adore treated fans to a spectacular volleyball display against UofT.

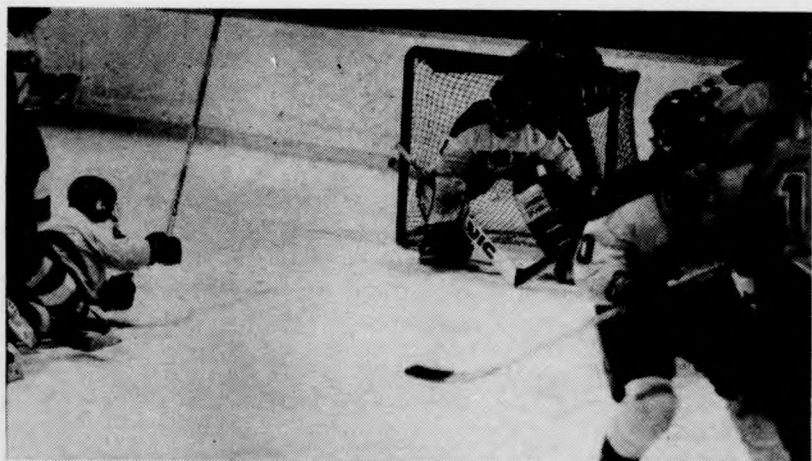
Tuesday he set York (OUAA) match records with 30 kills and 65 attacks, breaking the old record of 29 kills, set by Mark Ainsworth in 1980, and 59 attacks, set by John May the same year.

Adore led the Yeomen against Queen's, recording 13 kills and 17 digs.

In recognition of this, and the many other games in which Adore excelled throughout the season, he was awarded with his selection to the OUAA All-Star team for the third year in a row.

Teammate Djordje Ljubicic, who recorded 16 digs and 5 blocks against Queen's, was also selected to the All-Star team, as well Ljubicic was named the East division's rookie of the year.

"Djordje is a great first year player. He has a tremendous future, someone we can build around. As for Adrian, that's a nice way to cap off a fine career," Dyba said.



WILLIE POPP ready to pounce. The veteran York goalie was solid against the UQTR Patriotes last week. It wasn't enough however, as York was eliminated from post-season play by virtue of 5-2 and 6-3 losses to the defending CIAU champions in a best of three series. photo by Rob Cabral