

NCAA versus CIAU

Its time to get mad

BY HAMISH KNOX

Last weekend in Halifax (March 19, 20, and 21), eight of the top CIAU men's basketball teams gathered to compete for the national championship.

Meanwhile, to the south, their neighbours in the NCAA had already been at their tournament for two weeks. There is only one conclusion one can draw from this — the CIAU needs to get mad.

While our national university league's championship has eight teams and three televised games, the NCAA's tournament boasts 64 teams and over 200 games for fans to watch on TV, provided they have the correct satellite package. Still, Canada's obvious lack of basketball promotion at the university level is something the sport's governing body needs to look at.

With just three simple adjustments to its current championship format, the CIAU would increase its fan support and exposure exponentially.

First, increase the number of teams. Eight teams is great because the student athletes don't miss a lot of school and the whole tournament can be wrapped up in a weekend.

But it's not like these players haven't missed a lot of school already, what's another two or three days going to hurt? And if the athletes complain about missing too much class time, leave! Being a student-athlete is about juggling school work and the team, and if you can't handle it, bye-bye!

So let's increase the field to

at least 16 teams. 32 would be perfect, but knowing that organizations like the CIAU accept change like a British men's club, a tournament of 32 teams will be a long time coming.

So there's 16 teams. Let's start them off on the second weekend in March, preferably on Thursday and Friday, to pare them down to eight, then Saturday and Sunday to knock them down to four. Then the next weekend (third weekend in March for those scoring at home), it's the CIAU Final Four.

Saturday the championship teams are decided and Sunday they play for all the marbles.

Now, it may be great to increase the field, but what does it matter if no one is watching? With CTV Sportsnet up and running now, Canadians have the opportunity to see teams in their region, which naturally carries over to college sports.

The CIAU should cut a deal with Sportsnet to televise all the games in the tournament, which would lead to greater exposure. Isn't the CIAU trying to keep Canadian athletes from going to US schools? Well, show them what they're missing and they may stay.

Greater television coverage would not only make the CIAU bigger in the minds of young Canadian athletes, it would also make the athletes competing feel like their efforts are actually appreciated, as they are constantly seeing their southern counterparts on the tube every weekend from November on. However, an

expanded field and great television coverage won't mean a thing unless fans are filling the seats.

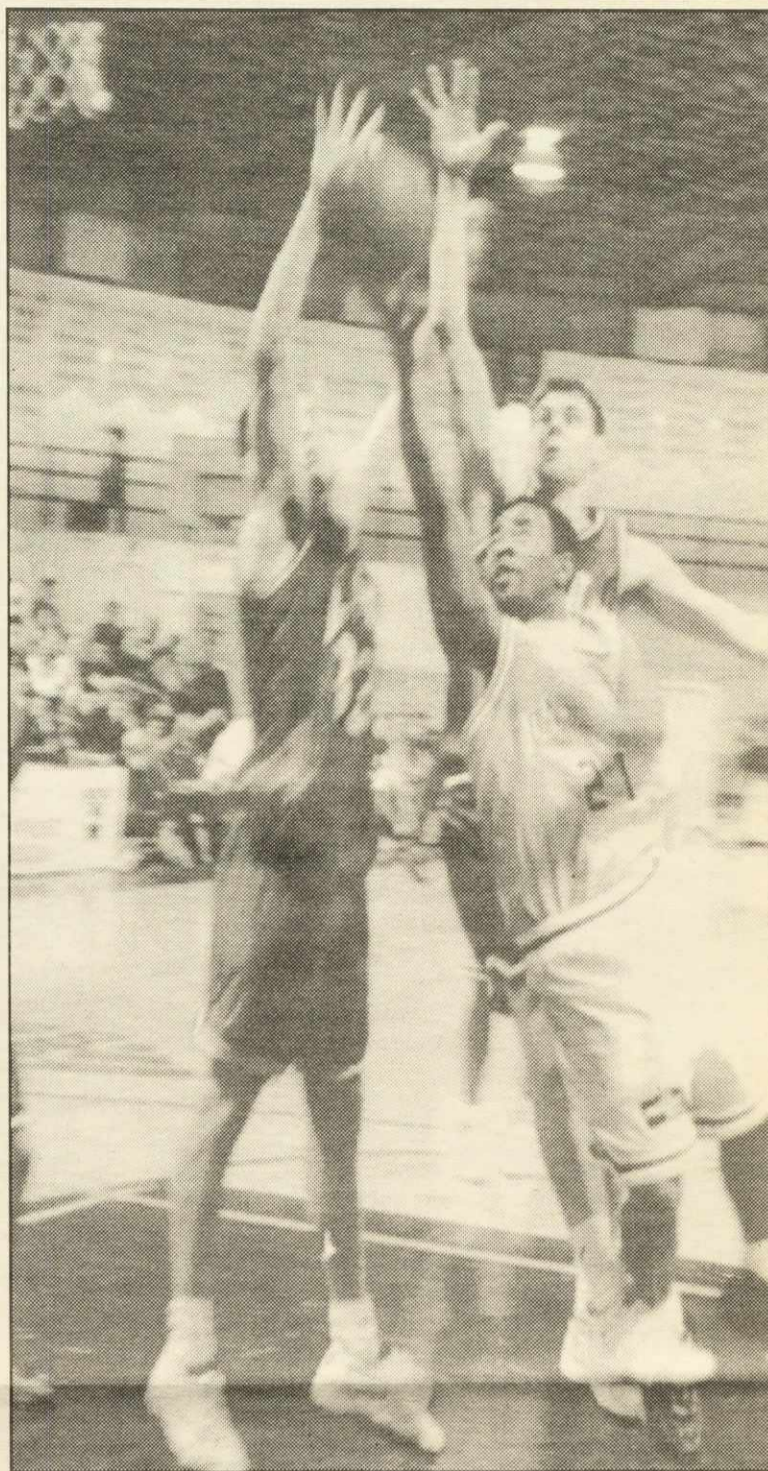
Sorry Halifax, your time has come. It's time to change the venue for the CIAU tournament. Think about how many fans the games would generate if the venue was changed every year. This tournament the CIAU got lucky and St. Mary's made it to the final, but what if UVic and the University of Winnipeg were the last two? If the championship was being held in Calgary, Vancouver or another western location, the gate revenue alone would give the CIAU executive heart attacks (and we know it's about the money, people).

Now, this isn't to suggest there should be another permanent home for the tournament or that Halifax has done a poor job — it's just that fans out west may want to see their teams compete without schlepping across the entire nation.

What the CIAU could do is rotate the finals between the five conferences, with the previous year's winner hosting. So, imagining that this system was in place next year and CanWest got the bid, the University of Alberta would be the host.

Fairly simple right? Well, here's the catch. The team hosting the finals doesn't get an automatic bid, they have to play their way in like everybody else.

Three simple changes. That's all the CIAU needs to make to have its tournament be more than an afterthought for college hoops fans in the month of March.



THE HAPPY HOOPER: CIAU needs an attitude change.

Australian rogaine comes to Nova Scotia

Annual orienteering competition set for May

BY IAN FOLKINS

This May 22 and 23 the Cobequid mountains behind the Wentworth ski hill will be the site of an unusual sporting event called a rogaine.

Invented in Australia, teams of two or more are given 24 hours to find about 40 red and white flags placed beside hilltops, stream junctions, swamps, and lakes.

Teams find their way through the forest with a map and compass. The winning team is the one that visits the most flag locations.

Two years ago, Dal student politicians and rogaining novices Chris Adams (then DSU president-elect) and Ted Chiasson (current DSU president) stunned the rogaining establishment by winning the inaugural event against a host of more seasoned rogainers, orienteers, ultra-marathoners, weekend hikers, and track athletes — despite having to hitch a ride to the start and arriving 40 minutes late. Surviving this experience made their later dealings with the Dal administration and professorate seem easy.

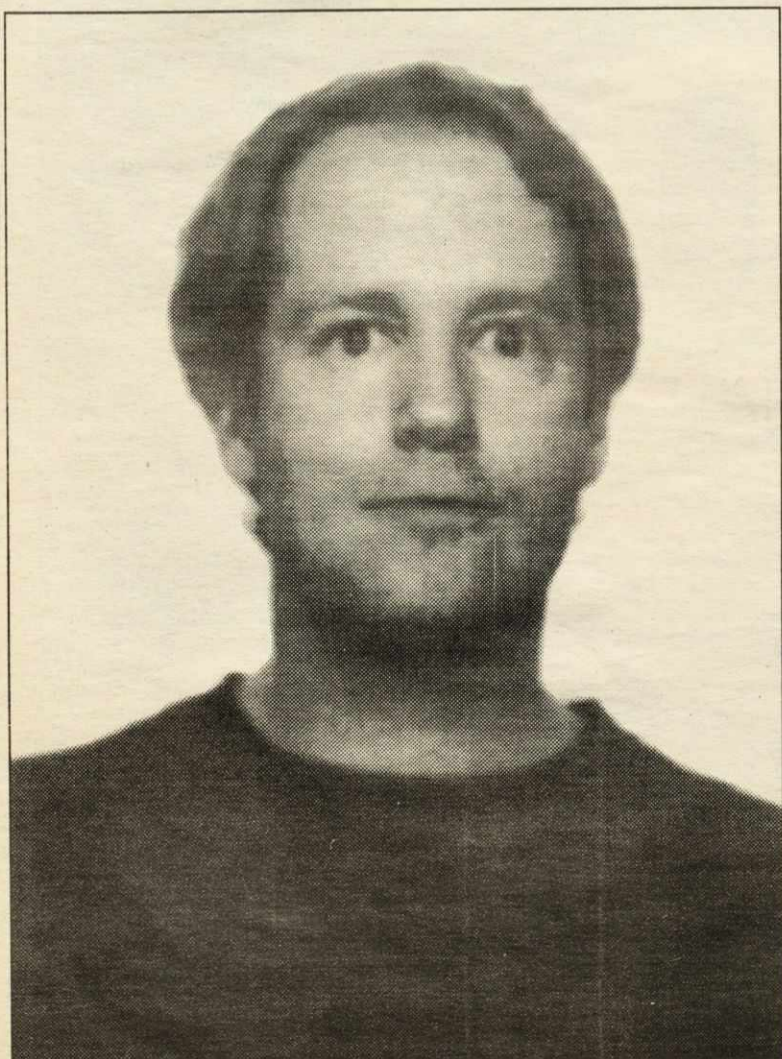
Their simple-but-effective strategy was to rely on Chiasson's navigation experience in the army and keep going all night with headlamps, only resting briefly for

a few hours. Other competitors brought tents and camping gear, or ran back to the start to sleep at the base.

The hard part with this approach is forcing yourself to get going again the next morning. The event is held in late May, and nights are relatively short. Visibility through the forest is still good

because the leaves are not out yet in the mostly hardwood forests, and because it is still too cool for blackflies.

Director and Dalplex aerobics instructor Michael Haynes is hoping to have two hundred people participate this year, with Chiasson and Adams expected back to defend their title.



PSYCHED: Master roganer and DSU president Ted Chiasson gets ready for the next event.

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