

# Athletic soft spots

by Heather Reynolds

Women are continuously informed from a very young age that they are not as strong as men; they cannot play rough, women get hurt easily.

Myth? Not at all: but it is all in the size. The soft spots women possess are different from those men have, but they do exist. For men the most vital area to protect seems to be the groin. This is because there is a limited amount of protection in this region, whereas the other areas of the body are protected by muscle development and strengthened ligaments. Women, on the other hand, are not easily harmed in the genital area due to protection from the pelvis. Women's more vulnerable spots include joint areas where there is less muscle development relatively speaking than men.

For both men and women the most injury-prone joint is the knee. This joint is classified as an unstable joint, for it has a large range of motion and as a result must rely on the surrounding ligaments to hold the joint together. The tendency for injury with the knee is increased

for women due to the increased angle of the front thigh muscles, the quadriceps, to the kneecaps, as a result of wider hips. The stress on the knee joint can create chronic pain in the front of the knee (chondromalacia), ligament tears, and in some cases dislocated kneecaps. The prevention of such injuries is easily accomplished by keeping the leg muscles, thighs, and lower legs toned. Leg lifts and walking are helpful exercises. If pain already exists, exercises with minimal bending of the knee are most beneficial until the pain subsides.

A second joint which is unstable is the shoulder. This is again because this joint has a wide range of motion and women are usually underdeveloped in the shoulder region. Any sudden strains to this joint may easily result in injury, and again, increasing the muscle development in the region is the best solution. Good flexibility through the upper body is also helpful in reducing the chance of injury.

Connected to the shoulder is the back, another injury-prone area. Most injuries in this region

stem from poor posture and untuned abdomen muscles. Pain in the back may be relieved by stretching the back and stomach, and prevented by continuously working on good posture and toning the abdominals.

The final soft spot to note is the ankles. Although this area is more stable than the other regions mentioned, the ligaments surrounding this joint are easily torn, stretched or sprained. Again, the best preventative medicine is to develop calf muscles, and stretch and loosen the ankle joint before activity. Achilles tendonitis is a common inflammation occurring at the back of the heel. The overuse of high-heeled shoes may create a problem by causing this inflexible tendon to be strained and possibly torn, resulting in injury.

The key to preventing most injury seems to be to maintain muscle tone of the surrounding muscles. Although this sounds like work, it can be easily accomplished by walking briskly 10 or 15 minutes a day or stretching often with a few situps and leg and arms lifts to boot. So stay in shape and stay injury-free.

# Athletes of the week

## Dalhousie Coca-Cola Female Athlete of the Week

Nov. 8-14 — Lucy Smith — Cross-Country

In the CIAU championships held in Victoria over the weekend, Lucy led her team to a fourth-place finish. It was one of the toughest fields for a number of years, with many national team members competing.

Lucy's eighth-place finish was outstanding, especially considering the fact that she had swollen glands and a sore throat the day of the race. She finished in a great time and passed three runners in the last hundred metres.

Lucy just missed being All-Canadian by one place. She is a second-year arts student from Bedford.

Other nominees: Kelly Andrews, Swimming; Mary K. Laves, Basketball.

## Dalhousie Coca-Cola Male Athlete of the Week

Nov. 8-14 — Eric Aubertin — Hockey

Right-winger Eric Aubertin had an outstanding weekend for the hockey Tigers. In Saturday's 7-4 win over UPEI, he netted three goals and added an assist.

In Sunday's shootout with Mount Allison, Eric upped his totals with two goals and an assist as the Tigers defeated the Mounties 13-7.

Eric is a 19-year-old Montreal Canadiens draft pick from 1986. He decided to come to Dalhousie to pursue an education while playing hockey. He is a first-year commerce student from St. Eustache, Québec.

Other nominees: Oivind Naess, Cross country; Eric Kerasiotis, Swimming; Willem Verbeek, Basketball.

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