

# Best in AUAA, women's soccer host playoffs

by Angel Figueroa

A humble, utilitarian score was all it took to end the season and satisfy the Dalhousie women's soccer team's biggest goal to date this year: to have the best record in the house and with it the right to host the AUAA championships this weekend.

On the receiving end was Saint Francis Xavier, who hosted Dal for the 1-0 finale on Sunday, October 31. Entering the match were two teams hungry for a must-win result — Xavier needed it to qualify, Dal wanted it for the hosting rights. The result was a bumpy, cautious style of play that had its moments of finesse from both squads on an awful, muddy pitch, leaving the two at a goalless deadlock for most of the game.

What broke the uneasy par was a skilful goal that became the deciding marker in the 71st minute of play. It was a strike that was fittingly spectacular, engineered by midfielder Suzanne Jones and striker Dana Holmes, with the final touch by Nicole Webb. From a throw-in deep in Xavier territory, Jones fed Holmes the ball, outplacating a defender for a give-and-go that left Jones back with the ball. A perfect pass to Webb, who was on the run into the penalty area, broke the defensive shape, leaving Webb to outclass the keeper and neatly tap it into the far side of the net.

Tension had just begun to rise as Dal was finding itself with the uncomfortable prospect of an undeserving draw. Clearly the better team, it had held territorial advantage for most of the game, displaying a high level of team cohesion, fitness, and skill. Yet a bountiful number of strikes were often wide, too high, or a bit soft, leaving more than a couple of frustrated players by half-time.

Striker Kate Gillespie was among the more obvious ones. Last year's AUAA all-star, she was well on her way to another romp of the league's scoring title until a couple of bitter injuries kept her sidelined for a good part of the season. Back in form for her first full game in three weeks, she proved herself a force to be reckoned with, playing havoc with the Xavier defensive line, despite being short on a number of scoring opportunities.

An injury still plaguing Dal is that of keeper Leahanne Turner, who has been a strong asset to the team all year, and is still dubious for this weekend. Replacement Meaghan Johnson got more than just some playing time, as she played a 90-minute performance and made a game-saving stop in the 86th minute of play. Other strong performers in the Dal win were Carla Perry, Stephanie Johnson and Eva Al-Khuri, while centre-back Lynn Robertson was pivotal in the defensive field of play.



Nicole Webb

"Lynn played her best game of the year," pointed out Neil Turnbull, head coach of the team. "She's very important to us in the backfield, just as Carla

is the workhorse in the midfield."

Robertson had her own special reasons to play for a win.

"It's my last year on the team," she explained. "The win was important because it would mean that it'd be the first time in my five years that we would be the hosts [for the AUAA's]."

"X was the only team to score on us all year," she added, "and it was our only loss. So it was a bit of revenge to go back to their field and play. I think we're finally coming together as a team, and its coming together at a really good time."

Turnbull agreed. "We set down a number of things we wanted to do; I'd spoken to the team that league play is an opportunity for us to get our shape and understand what our roles are on the field. This was our final game to solidify that and make any final adjustments while enjoying the game and getting prepared for the coming weekend."

Dal's opponents for the AUAA championship are Memorial, Acadia,

and the University of PEI. Out of the race is last year's champions, Saint Mary's, but ironically, playoffs will be held at SMU's Husky Stadium, due to the atrocious condition of Wickwire Field. Memorial faces Dal in the first semi-final at 5:30 pm, while at 7:30 pm is UPEI versus Acadia. The championship game is between the winners on Sunday at 6:30 pm.

"There are some advantages to playing at SMU," reflected Turnbull. "Hopefully, we'll be the winners, but whoever it is, at least they'll have two games under their belt playing on the artificial turf, because the nationals [at McGill] will be on turf as well. So it's advantageous for the conference."

Commenting on Dal's hopes to be the winners, "we will have to be sharp. We can't take anything for granted. We have a few niggling injuries, but I think as we get prepared to play, we'll be ready for the challenge. I'd say its very positive for us."

## X-country sweep

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Memorial University of Newfoundland was third with 67 points while St. FX finished fourth with 87 points and Acadia last with 131 points.

Bocarro was full of praise for the coaching of Al Yarr and the performance of Halfyard.

"It's all about five runners running well and consistently," he said Wednesday. He noted the team trained hard in the last two weeks in preparation for the meet.

Bocarro pointed to Halfyard's eighth-place performance, even though he was battling a stomach cramp and an achilles tendon injury.

Selected Atlantic coach of the year, Yarr downplayed the honour.

## Hungry for no. 3

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tough counting the ones who can still walk on Sunday. Meanwhile, Moncton is enough on its own for Dal to worry about in the other playoff game.

### Women's Volleyball Schedule

- Wed. Nov 3 ACA @ DAL 7 pm
- Sat. Nov 6 DAL @ MUN 8 pm
- Sun. Nov 7 DAL @ MUN 1 pm
- Tues. Nov 16 DAL @ ACA 8 pm
- Tues. Nov 23 DAL @ SMU 7 pm
- Thurs. Dec 2 DAL @ StFX 7:30 pm
- Sat. Jan 8 DAL @ UNB 8 pm
- Sun. Jan 9 DAL @ UNB 2 pm
- Wed. Jan 12 SMU @ DAL 7 pm
- Fri. Jan 21-23 Lawton's Volleyball Classic @ DAL
- Sat. Jan 29 UPEI @ DAL 6 pm
- Sun. Jan 30 UPEI @ DAL noon
- Sat. Feb 5 DAL @ UDM 3 pm
- Sun. Feb 6 DAL @ MTA 1 pm
- Wed. Feb StFX @ DAL 7 pm
- Sat. Feb 19 MtA @ DAL 6 pm
- Sun. Feb 20 UDM @ DAL noon
- Feb 26-27 AUAA Championships @ SMU (Top 4 teams)

"It's just another way of saying the athletes did a hell of a good job," he said.

The teams, with rankings in brackets, that are running in the women's event are: University of Toronto Blues (1), University of British Columbia Thunderbirds (2), Dalhousie (3), Queen's Golden Gaels (4), University of Western Ontario Mustangs (5), University of Calgary Dinosaurs (6) and McGill (7) Marlets.

The Thunderbirds lead the men's field while the Blues are second. The Mustangs are ranked third while the Golden Gaels are fourth. The University of Windsor Lancers are fifth while McGill Redmen are in sixth. Dalhousie are not ranked in the top ten but are in the event because they are hosting it.

Moncton is a team with a fresh memory of its 4-2 loss in last year's semi-final against SMU, a loss that slammed the door on a dream it has never realized — an AUAA championship. An impressive team and an impressive record has left it with hopes of its own for resuming that dream by first knocking out Dal, a *coup de grace* that would be of stellar proportions, as Dal is the two-time Atlantic champions, and has a legitimate claim on its third.

"I'm looking forward to the game," Kent stated pointedly. "The last time we played [on October 17 in a 1-1 draw] it was a good game. We out-shot them 15-6, hit two goal posts and a crossbar, and had a missed penalty kick in the last 15 minutes of the game, so I'm very much looking forward to setting the record straight."

So will the rest of the squad. Back in the lineup will be all four of those who were missing at Xavier. Along with the rookies and the other veterans, Dal is on the line to further not only the standard it has achieved all season, but also over the last two years — to claim the championship, again.

Coach Kent put it simply. "The guys are very hungry and ready to do the job."

Do it, boys.

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