



UNB NATIONAL MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Tigers edge V-Reds in tense final



by Neil Duxbury
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Photos: Warren Watson
and Maria Paisley

After 479 minutes of basketball, the inaugural UNB National Men's Basketball Tournament was decided on two shots in the final 5 seconds.

The situation was similar for both: clock almost out, set play blown, a chance to win the game. The only difference was the result. Brian Palmer's jumper from behind the arc dropped to give the Dal Tigers a three point lead, and the UNB Varsity Reds five seconds to reply. Brian Scales attempt, as the clock expired, was not so successful.

The previous 39:55 were just as good. The Tigers took an early lead. However, the V-Reds grabbed it for themselves, as Gordon McNeilly lead the charge. The Tigers clawed the back the lead, and finished the half with a 40-33 lead after Palmer made a three to end the half.

The V-Reds hung tough as Dal attempted to put on a spurt, as they had against Toronto and St FX, staying in touch with good play from John Low, Simon Orr-Ewing and John Kreiner, finding his range after shooting 0 for 10 from the floor in the first half. It was Kreiner's three that gave the V-Reds a 71-70 lead heading into the final 5 minutes, raising the noise level further still.

The presentations after the match included the naming of the all-star team. UNB was represented by McNeilly and Scales on a team including Palmer of Dal, Geoff Kott of Acadia and Patrice Lemieux of Bishops. Dal's Shawn Plancke was named tournament MVP.

UNB 88 - 83 Acadia

The V-Reds survived a strong second half comeback and injury to Dan Graf to edge the Acadia Axemen 88-83 to earn their bout with the Tigers in the final. The Tigers beat the StFX X-Men.

Deprived of forward Simon Orr-Ewing, after taking two fouls in the first 2:20, Jon Kreiner stepped in to power the Reds to a 42-33 half-time lead. The Axemen came out strong at the start of the second and quickly cut into UNB's 9 point advantage, taking the lead five minutes in. The lead was traded through the next ten minutes until, with the score favouring Acadia 72-70, Graf went down. He lay prone for several minutes before being carried from the arena on a spinal board.

The injury seemed to inspire the Reds as they came back to take the lead as the Axemen hit foul trouble. Acadia closed as UNB failed to take advantage of their time at the charity stripe, but were unable to get past again. Graf's injury was later discovered to be whiplash. Although his doctor advised that he would be out for a month, Graf hopes to return online.

UNB 92 - 82 McGill

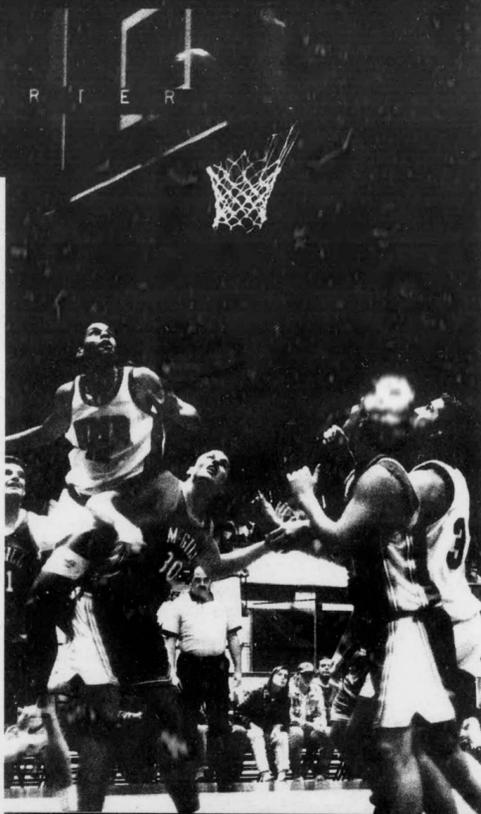
The V-Reds easily took their tournament opener, 98-82 over the McGill Redmen. Battling through technical difficulties with the clock, the V-Reds steadily built themselves a buffer and were never really challenged by the Redmen.

At the heart of much of UNB's play was Brian Scales. Scales played a dominating game, controlling the offense and playing physical defense. On the other end of many of Scales' no look bullets was Simon Orr-Ewing, a 6ft9 tower in the centre of the key. Orr-Ewing scored 25 points in just 19 minutes on the floor.

While an entertaining match, there was little tension with the exception of McGill's guard Sam Mendolia, who took exception to some of the more physical aspects of UNB's defence. In their first round action, the other AUAA teams won inter-conference battles.



This time it's Stanleigh's teammates who are leaving.
Photo Warren Watson



Coaches' Corner



by Murray Thorpe
Brunswickan Sports

After the thrilling finish of the final game of the tournament both coaches were approached for comment. Clint Hamilton, coach of the Varsity Reds, commented on the drama of the game by saying, "Tough shot ... we forced them to make a tough shot and they did. We are great entertainment value for the fans, but it is not so entertaining when you are the head coach. Our kids did a great job and showed why they are a team that should be supported."

The game was not always so close. At times the team fell behind as much as 10 points. Some of the Varsity Reds such as Simon-Orr Ewing, came out flat. With 4:48 to go in the first half, Coach Hamilton pulled Orr-Ewing from the game and had a head-to-head conversation with him. This seemed to have some effect, as with 1:28 left in the half, Orr-Ewing was put back on and at his first chance, he slammed the ball home.

Coach Hamilton obviously not happy to lose at the buzzer said, "If I was told at the beginning of the tournament that I had the chance to win or lose the game at the buzzer, I would have been ecstatic. You would never hear me say that I would be happy to lose at the buzzer. We felt, coming in, we could be competitive and we could win the tournament and we showed that. I am proud of the players and they should take full credit for making the tournament a success."

Tim McGarrigle, coach of the Dalhousie Tigers, commented on his team's winning three-pointer, "the last possession, we were running a regular set but the play broke down ... and it worked!" Dalhousie's star of the game, Brian Parker, commented on his final bucket, "I knew I was taking the last shot and I took it into my own hands." Individual play may result in a win, but teamwork is needed for a championship.

Coach McGarrigle expressed the necessary respect to the losing side and added, "no surprise to the coaches that we (AUAA) are the toughest nationally but we don't seem to get any respect. It looks like a lot of AUAA games will come down to the last possession ... the fans will be happy ... it will be an exciting season."