



Al Scott, Dalhousie men's volleyball coach, would like to see a bigger fan following for AUAA volleyball. Photo: Mary C. Sykes, Dal Photo.

Spotlight on

A L S C O T T

BY MARK ALBERSTAT

One of the winningest coaches in the AUAA talks about how he got there and how he coaches . . .

AL SCOTT IS CURRENTLY in his sixth year as head coach of the Dalhousie men's volleyball team, which is presently at the CIAU Championships. A few weekends ago the men's squad picked up their sixth consecutive AUAA title.

Scott is one of the winningest coaches in AUAA history and is currently riding a league winning streak that stretches back to the Christmas before last.

When asked about how he produces such winning teams Scott said "One of the things we have done at Dalhousie is that we've taken athletes who were not necessarily the best players coming out of high school but had the potential and developed them within our program. Not every university program in Canada is prepared to do that and we've had pretty good success with it. I think we, with this program, try to develop a high regard for the development of the basic skills of the game and our players can compare very favorably with any of the top teams in the country."

"The thing that would make us one of the top teams in the country is if we had a little bit better competition within the league."

Al Scott is unquestionably a worker and wants his teams to do the same but in the AUAA there is little competition for the Tigers.

"I would like to see the Atlantic Conference as the number one conference in the country. If that was the case we wouldn't win every year, but I think it would be better for the sport. It would also be better for our athletes to know every weekend that they would really have to perform in order to come out on the positive side of winning."

Interestingly enough coach Scott never played volleyball in his college days at the University of Calgary. Instead he was a hockey player. In high school he says he was mainly a "hockey, football, and swimming athlete."

Swimming was one of Scott's first loves, it being one of his family's pastimes. "I was involved (in competitive swimming) from the

time I was six years old till about 22." He then went on to do some coaching.

"I still swim, although in the winter months I tend to do a lot of swimming once the season's over. I went in a Triathlon last year, which was the first one I ever did. I would have liked to have done better but I think I was 60th out of 120."

"I also play tennis," he added, "and I cycle and swim and usually run four to five times a week."

It was not until Scott was teaching in a high school in Dawson Creek, B.C., that he got involved in volleyball. He remembers that the school had very good athletes on the volleyball team. Scott soon found that the calibre of athlete he was coaching was steadily improving, forcing him to attend volleyball clinics to stay ahead of his players.

Before coming to Dalhousie Scott coached and taught in British Columbia for ten years, five in northern B.C. and five years in Victoria. The last five years Scott coached the University of Victoria's volleyball team. At the same time, he says, "I had about four teams on the go, the university team, the high school team, the junior high school team and the Canada Games team."

In 1979, Scott was named B.C. Coach of the Year. It was the first time they had given out the award, and it was undoubtedly a very exciting year for Scott, as his university team placed second in Canada West, and was third ranked in the country. His B.C. provincial team won the Canada Games, his high school team finished third in the province, and his junior high school team finished first in the city of Victoria.

Scott left B.C., the site of his successes, because "I was looking for a different challenge. I considered for some time the possibility of a university environment but in Victoria it was not a real possibility in that the faculty in physical education were not coaching as well."

It was then that Scott got a phone call offering him his present job. He came down to Nova Scotia and says the job sounded

like a challenge, talked it over with his wife, and decided to come to Dalhousie.

When he came, Scott says that "the program had some very good athletes, but one of the things that was lacking was a full time coach. Having an outside coach made it very difficult to achieve some realistic goals and when I came it then became a situation where you could have an opportunity to develop athletes more to their potential."

While in British Columbia Scott's B.C. provincial team often went to the Pacific Rim International Junior tournament where they sometimes played teams from the Orient. He uses some of their style for his own teams.

"I think what I try to do is look at the oriental system and pick out some of the strong points from their games and combine it with some of the strong points from the European game to try to develop a style of play that is suitable for our athletes in Atlantic Canada."

A little after Scott came to Dalhousie he initiated the Dalhousie Volleyball Classic, now a major annual event on the local varsity calendar. It was set up, says Scott, "to provide a local focus for our athletes and to provide a vehicle that we could use to highlight high level volleyball in Atlantic Canada."

"It is now one of the very top tournaments in the country and it serves, most years, as a preview of the CIAU Championships because we have made it a goal to attract the very top teams in Canada."

Although the team repeats their championship performance each year, the crowd at the matches remains small.

"I think it is a thing that's disappointing to a coach, something we really have to address to find ways and means to attract a better following for volleyball. We do very well at the Classic but that seems to be the one event of the year that we have reasonable crowds. If our league was very competitive I think the opportunity to have greater crowds would be increased."

Scott also said that "some of the problems we have are because that we only have four teams, and that makes it difficult. Our teams in the Atlantic Canada have not been considered amongst the powers in the country, certainly that's the thing we would like to change." Scott added, "it always seems to relate to coaching and there are indications that the people involved in the coaching in the AUAA at this time are very interested in competing at the national level and hopefully the conference will improve."

When asked how Scott sees himself as a coach he said "I think I'm a demanding coach. As the years go by you learn to modify and I think the very nature of our athlete today is constantly changing. I know over the years I've had to compromise some of my values and standards to adjust to today's athletes." He went on to say, "I think coaches who stay in university coaching over a long period of time have to do that, to remain successful."

Al Scott certainly has remained successful over the years and by all indications he should remain on in his winning ways.

Volleyball teams headed for CIAU's

BOTH THE DALHOUSIE Tigers men's and women's volleyball teams will be at York University in Toronto this week to compete in the CIAU Championships. The Dal squads clinched their respective AUAA titles and earned a berth at the Nationals two weeks ago at Mount Allison.

The men's Tigers are seeded sixth in the eight-team single elimination championship tournament. The Dal team's first match will be against number three seeded Victoria at 7 p.m. on Thursday. Other first contests in the men's division include number one ranked Manitoba against number eight seeded Laval, number two ranked Saskatchewan against number seven seeded York, and number four seeded Calgary against fifth seeded Toronto.

The women's Tigers are also seeded sixth and will meet third-ranked York in their opening match. Other opening round matches include top-ranked Winnipeg against eight seeded Ottawa, number two seed Calgary versus seventh ranked Laval, and fourth seeded Saskatchewan facing fifth ranked Victoria.

In both the men's and women's divisions, first round winners will advance to the championship semi-finals, while the losers will compete in the consolation round.

Both the Tiger teams enter the tournament with perfect AUAA seasons behind them.

Women's volleyball

THE DALHOUSIE TIGERS women's volleyball team captured its second consecutive AUAA title, its third in four years, at Mount Allison two weeks ago with 15-11, 15-4, and 15-11 victories over the University of New Brunswick.

Leading the Tigers against UNB were Tournament MVP and AUAA All-Star Simona Votrel with 25 kills and League MVP Brenda Turner with 10 kills, six ace serves and three blocks. Tiger Sue Furey added eight kills and three blocks.

The win completed a perfect season for the Tigers, who boasted a 26-0 match and 78-0 game record over the past two years.

The women's Tigers will travel, along with the AUAA champion men's team, to York University to compete in the CIAU Championships March 8-10. The women's Tigers won the CIAU title in 1982.



Photo: Bill Jensen, Dal Photo.