

# Dal finds silver lining at Digs Classic

BY CARMEN TAM

The Dalhousie Tigers asserted themselves as contenders for a National Championship title this past weekend at the 18th annual Dalhousie Digs Volleyball Classic at Dalplex.

The fans that came to support the Tigers last Sunday watched fifth-ranked Dalhousie capture a silver medal against the third-ranked Sherbrooke Vert et Or in a gruelling three hour marathon in which Sherbrooke edged Dalhousie 3-2, winning in rally points.

The final score of 13-15, 12-15, 15-13, 15-13 and 15-11 reflected two evenly matched teams who both entered the final with perfect 4-0 records.

The Tigers started the gold medal match by jumping to a 2-0 lead over Sherbrooke, a silver medalist at the Classic in 1996. Dal setter Peter Exall tied the first game 12-12 when he tipped one in for the Tigers. Terry Martin drove home the next two points for Dal with solid setting by Exall. The winner came when the three man wall of Martin, Jason Trepanier and Exall blocked a Sherbrooke attack.

The Vert Et Or lead early in the second game but saw the lead change several times. At 14-12 for Dalhousie, Sherbrooke's Pierre Cumberland put a critical serve into the net which gave Dal a side out. Dal won the game when Sherbrooke misfired a hit out of bounds.

In the third set, the Tigers fell behind 7-10 when Dal was flat footed for three straight

Sherbrooke points. Eventually the Tigers stepped up their intensity to even the game at 13-13 when Exall set one up for Trepanier. Unfortunately, Exall's serve grazed the top of the net, giving Sherbrooke a side out and a chance to take the game 15-13.

The Vert et Or started the attack in the fourth and built what looked at first to be an unsurmountable 13-8 lead. The Tigers looked a bit tired but gamely fought back to tie at 13-13. In a match characterized by long rallies, Sherbrooke forced a fifth and deciding set by winning 15-13.

The fifth game was played in rally points where any team can score regardless of which team is serving. It was 5-7 Sherbrooke in the half before switching sides. Sherbrooke's Frederic Colnoir served for three straight points including two aces to put his team ahead 11-6. Dal narrowed the score with a kill by Eric Villeneuve and a stuff block from Martin. Villeneuve landed a service ace to make the score 13-11. However, a successful kill by Cumberland and a missed dig by Dal gave Sherbrooke a hard fought victory, 15-11.

Powerful outside hitter Villeneuve provided the offence for Dal with 32 kills and 9 digs. Martin, the CIAU 1995 Rookie of the Year, added 30 kills, 12 digs and 11 blocks.

Dalhousie advanced to the gold medal match with a 3-1 win over the UBC Thunderbirds in the semi-final. The T-Birds, ranked 10th this season, were defeated

in two and a half hours by the determined Tiger squad. The UBC game was marked by superb spike serving from the West coast competitors.

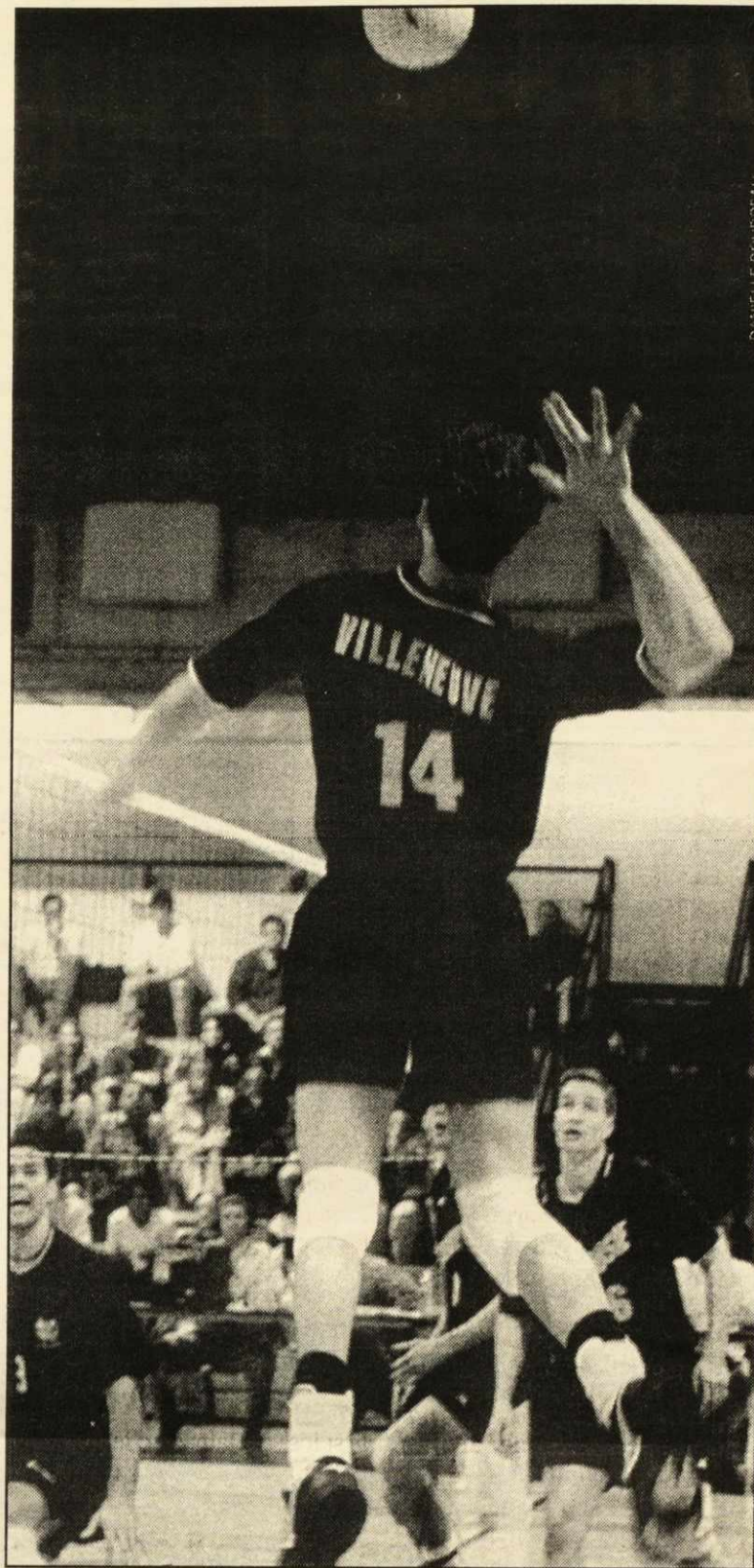
After a tough 13-15 loss in the first game, captain Eric Villeneuve urged his team to "push harder." His team must have listened as they won the next three games, but it wasn't easy. Both teams went all out and Dal prevailed when Jamie Mallon made a superb effort with a kill down the centre to win 17-16.

The third game lasted an hour and a half as Dal built a strong 14-6 lead. The Tigers finished the game 15-7 when UBC hit one out of bounds. It was a slow start in the fourth game but Dal eventually scratched out a 10-point lead. Terry Martin made it 14-4 with a kill and Dal won the fourth and final game 15-7 with a tip from Halifax's John Hobin.

Continuing to be a force, Martin totalled 29 kills with his 7 digs and was named player of the game. Villeneuve followed with 24 kills and 3 blocks. Both athletes had consistent passing in the win.

The Tigers went 3-0 in round robin play, first by sweeping the Laurentian Voyagers 15-3, 15-3 and 15-9 in less than 90 minutes in a game in which the Voyageurs showed little defense and blocking against the Tigers' powerful attacks. Mallon had seven service aces in the victory. Later that evening, Dal met the 7th-ranked Montreal Carabins in what was expected to be tight match. The Carabins had defeated highly

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Eric Villeneuve drives home a kill at Dal Digs Classic last weekend. The Tigers won silver in the 18th annual tournament.

## Women have a rougher go

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

The Dalhousie Tigers faced some stiff competition in the women's conference of the Digs Volleyball Classic.

The Montreal Carabins upset fifth-ranked McGill to take first place honours. York downed Guelph in three straight sets to finish third. Universite de Moncton and Dalhousie, the only AUAA reps in the woman's conference, placed fifth and sixth respectively.

Dal opened the tournament against Guelph University. They lost the first set 2-15, then got it together to take the next three sets 15-12, 15-10, and 16-14.

Dal took on McGill later that evening and though they fought hard they never quite capitalized. McGill took the match 15-10, 15-11 and 15-7.

This placed the Tigers in a three-way tie for first in their division. "It came down to points," said co-captain Cara MacKenzie.

"We wound up in third and Guelph was first even though we beat them."

Dalhousie fell to local rival Moncton in three games, 15-7, 16-14, and 15-10, to finish the tournament in sixth place.

Kia Johanssen, who missed last Sunday's game against Mount Allison because of the flu, was on the bench again this weekend. She sprained her right thumb in last Saturday's game against Moncton. Tiger Angela Barret played in Johanssen's place for the second weekend in a row.

"It's so hard to watch from the bench," said Johanssen. "I couldn't play and Michelle had a back problem so we were a bit low."

Johanssen is unsure when she will be returning to the court.

Dalhousie, now ranked second in the AUAA moves on to Acadia this weekend and will be taking on St. FX this coming Wednesday at the Dalplex.

## A brief history...

The Dalhousie Digs Classic was established in 1980 by then volleyball coaches Al Scott and Lois MacGregor.

Sponsored by Digs (a volleyball sports clothing company), the tournament aims to provide a showcase for national talent and is regarded as one of the top tournaments each year for contenders for the national title.

"We try to make it one of the feature tournaments in the country and we recruit the best teams we can get," said co-founder Scott.

In the past, NCAA teams from as far off as Penn State and George Mason University have made the trek. Even teams from Mexico have been courted.

The Tigers have always done well at the Classic — the highlight being a double gold in 1991.

## this week's games:

### Thursday, January 30

Hockey vs. St. FX, 7 p.m. @ Memorial Arena

### Friday, January 31

AUAA Hockey All-Star Game, 7 p.m. @ Metro Ctr.

### Saturday, February 1

Basketball(w) vs. UNB, 6 p.m. @ Dalplex  
Basketball(m) vs. UNB, 8 p.m. @ Dalplex  
Volleyball(w) @ Acadia, 2 p.m.

### Sunday, February 2

Hockey @ Acadia, 7:30 p.m.

### Tuesday, February 4

Basketball(w) @ SMU, 6 p.m.  
Basketball(m) @ SMU, 8 p.m.

### Wednesday, February 5

Volleyball(w) vs. St. FX, 7 p.m. @ Dalplex  
Hockey @ SMU, 7:30 p.m.