

SPORTS

Dalhousie Tigers capture 18th AUAA crown

Wins consolation finals at Nationals

BY CARMEN TAM

The Dalhousie men's volleyball team captured their 18th AUAA crown in 19 years under the reign of head coach Al Scott last month to make their 19th consecutive appearance at the CIAU Tournament. The Tigers, entering the finals with an 8-2 conference record, won the title in commanding style, sweeping the best-of-three AUAA Championships over the University of New Brunswick Varsity Reds 2-0.

Dal, who had struggled against UNB in the regular season, trounced their rivals 3-0 in the opening match by game scores of 15-6, 15-8, 15-9. Top performances for Dal came from Jason Trepanier who had 18 kills and 11 digs while teammate Terry Martin had 16 kills, 10 digs and 4 blocks. Tiger middle blocker Bobby Stevens chipped in 8 digs, 4 blocks and 2 service aces in the win as Jeff Byrne responded with 12 kills and 9 digs for UNB.

A more focused Reds team showed up the next day but still came out flat against Dal's superb blocking and aggressive offense. The Tigers dumped UNB 15-9, 15-10 and 15-7, much to the delight of the 300 fans that showed up at Dalplex. Martin and John Hobin had 19 kills each while Trepanier added 17 kills.

"It was our first goal obviously," said setter Dave Cox who played in the first match. "We were pretty excited. We worked pretty hard in the month leading up to the AUAA's and it paid off."

"We really came together as a team," added Stevens who has seen increased court time since Christmas. "It wasn't anything technical or tactical, but everything just showed up to play and that was great."

This makes it the third year in a row that Dal defeated UNB in six games at the AUAA Championships. Despite UNB's lacklustre performance in the final, their showing during the regular season indicates a much more competitive league for next year. UNB's head coach Mark Thibault was voted AUAA Coach of the Year for steering his team to their strongest performance in recent memory. Martin, a member of the National Team, shared league MVP honours with the Reds' Darcy Harris. Dal co-captain John Hobin accumulated 31 kills, 29 digs and 13 blocks in the series, was named playoff MVP and was the AUAA nominee for the CIAU TSN Award for academic achievement, athletic skills and citizenship. Dal's Chris Wolfenden was overlooked for Rookie of the Year, which went to Memorial's Kevin Garnier. The Seahawks finished the season winless at 0-10. Wolfenden was recognised for a spot on the AUAA All-Star team along with Trepanier and Hobin. The Reds' Byrne and Scott Munro rounded out the selection.

Dal — who were nationally ranked sixth for most of the season and were as high as second in late November — were dropped a notch to seventh entering the national championships, a common occurrence for the Atlantic Conference champs each year. Bronze medalists in '93-'94 and '94-'95, the Tigers had hoped to improve on their CIAU silver from last season at these Championships hosted by the University of Calgary's Jack Simpson Gymnasium for the third consecutive year. The Tigers' dream of a gold medal was dashed by a 3-1 first-round loss to the second-seeded Saskatchewan Huskies. Saskatchewan, making their third CIAU appearance in four years, finally got past the Tigers who beat them in all-important opening matches in 1995 and 1997. The Huskies earned a 15-12, 10-15, 15-8 and 15-10 victory over Dal.

Martin, who was named a First Team All-Canadian the night before, recorded a team high 35 kills while Trepanier had 23 kills, 14 digs and 5 blocks for the Tigers. Hobin contributed 12 kills and 10 digs in the effort. The Huskies' win made up for their dismal last-place result from last year as their Player of the Match Scott Schutz had 22 kills and Aaron Canfield had 23 digs in the win.

"We played pretty well in the first

match," said Cox. "Saskatchewan was a really tough team to beat but we brought our 'B' game. It was disappointing but we managed to bounce back."

Dal regrouped for the consolation semifinals where they ended the Vert et Or's season by downing the third-ranked Sherbrooke 17-15, 15-11 and 15-11. Player of the Match honours went to Cox who set up Martin for 33 kills. This was Dal's second victory over Sherbrooke in their last seven encounters this season. With the win, the Tigers avenged a gold medal loss to Sherbrooke at the Dal Classic.

Dal won the consolation finals for the second time in three years by blanking the eighth-seed, University of Western Ontario, with game scores of 15-6, 15-11 and 15-5. The Mustangs edged fourth-ranked Laval 3-2 to make the consolation final. Hobin was named Player of the Match, leading his team with 8 kills, 12 digs and 4 blocks over Western's Maron Habash who had 13 kills and 7 digs in the effort.

"In games two and three we played well. It was nice to finish the year with two good wins like that," said Cox.

The powerful Canada West Conference swept the medal awards as the top-seeded Winnipeg Wesmen confirmed their first-place ranking

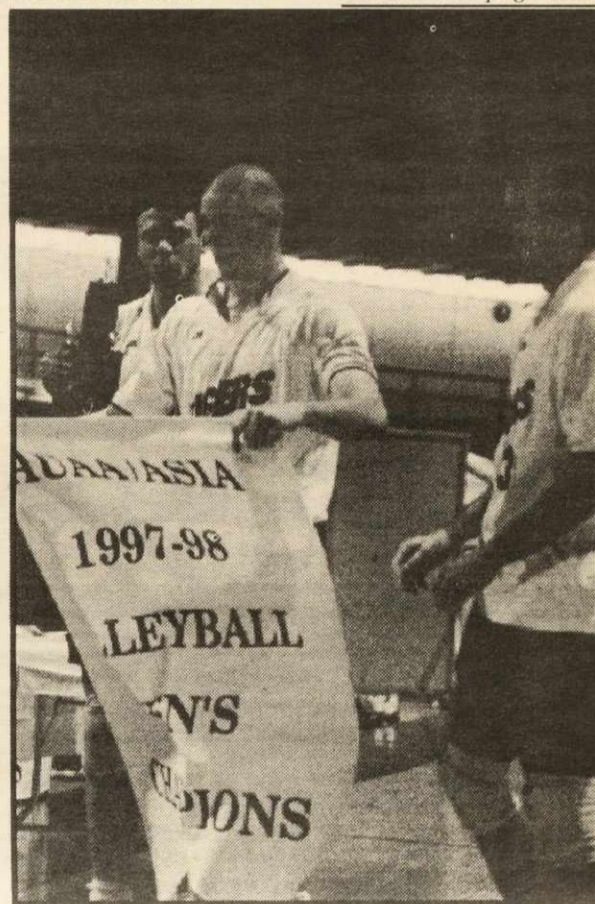
with a 3-0 win over the Huskies in the final — their first national title since 1987. Defending champs, the Alberta Golden Bears, who came in as wildcards in fifth-place, captured the bronze over the sixth-ranked

Toronto Varsity Blues with a 3-1 victory. Laval and Sherbrooke, both from the Quebec league, finished winless for seventh place. Sherbrooke, who had garnered top Coach, top Rookie, and Player of the Year honours, was expected to have a better showing at the Nationals.

Martin was in fine form after a two-month hiatus recovering from ankle injuries, and totalled 80 kills in three matches. He was named to the Tournament All-Star Team which included

Ian Taylor (Winnipeg), Murray Grapentine (Alberta), Derek Nicholl (Alberta), Chris Ulmer (Saskatchewan) and Jeff Chung (Toronto). Heath MacLeod of

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Veterans John Hobin, Terry Martin and Jason Trepanier show off their championship banner.

DWC off to Nationals at Brock

BY GAZETTE STAFF

On Wednesday March 4, the Dalhousie Wrestling Club (DWC) began the long drive to the 1998 CIAU Wrestling Championships at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. The tournament will take place March 5-7.

The club qualified four wrestlers at the AUAA Wrestling Championships at UNB on Feb. 14. In the past two seasons, the club has only qualified one wrestler per year, so this year's

performance is a good sign that wrestling is building a strong hold at Dal.

According to the latest CIAU rankings released, AUAA champion at 52kg Logan Ward is ranked seventh. Both Gavin Tweedie and Scott Malcolm who are AUAA silver medallists at 72 and 82kg, are currently ranked eighth. Scott Aldridge is Dal's other AUAA champion at 90kg and is ranked fifth.

Also competing for Dal will be Andrew Moebus, the AUAA bronze

medallist. As only the top two competitors from each weight category are eligible for CIAUs, he was not initially expected to compete. However, Memorial's AUAA silver medallist was injured during practise last week, and Moebus will be the second AUAA representative. He will be seeded eighth going into the competition.

Head coach Aldridge is very optimistic about this year's squad.

"This truly is the best bunch of guys I have had to date and I would like to see all of us place in the top

four," he said. "I want to show the CIAU and Dal that wrestling is here to stay."

On a side note, the DWC would like to thank all the sponsors who have donated much needed funds for this CIAU trip. Since the creation of their Dalhousie Wrestler newsletter, the response has been overwhelming.

"I would like to personally thank the anonymous wrestling alumnus who left the envelope at the Dalplex," said Aldridge. "The DWC will make sure that the money is well spent."



The Women's Volleyball Tigers captured the AUAA title on February 22 at the Dalplex. Please see next week's issue for the story in its entirety. (Photo courtesy Dalplex)

Volleyball