

# S P O R T S

## Yeomen highwire act moves on to CIAU final in Edmonton

York rebounds from shaky start to beat Dalhousie 2 games to 1 in regional playdown

By EDO VAN BELKOM

After playing their playoff hockey on a tight-rope, the York Yeomen finally took matters into their own hands in the final game of their regional playoff series against the Dalhousie Tigers, beating the Nova Scotia school by a 7-2 score.

Although the final game was won decisively, the Yeomen were at one time in the series, just a single goal away from elimination when they lost the first game 5-3 and the second game went into double overtime. Fortunately, York finally came out on top, at 3:42 of the second overtime period.

But the Yeomen seemed to thrive under pressure this season, waiting for the exact moment the script writer set aside for last minute heroics before making their moves.

**Do you remember?** With 43 seconds to go against sixth place Waterloo, York scores the winning goal taking a lead for the first and only time in the sudden death elimination game.

**Do you remember?** Losing the second game of the semi-final series against the University of Toronto at the Ice Palace in overtime, just so they could take the series back on the Blues home rink in front of the largest crowd (4,200) to see a college hockey game in years.

**Do you remember?** The Yeomen jumping out to a 4-0 lead in the first period of the second game of the final OUAA series against Laurier, allowing the Golden Hawks to close the gap to 4-3 before putting them away 6-3 to win the Queen's Cup for the second straight year.

These heroics prompted Toronto Sun writer Lance Hornby to label the Yeomen "a team famous for dramatic escapes."

### Tigers 5 - Yeomen 3

But regardless of the method, results are what really count.

York now moves on to their second consecutive CIAU final, more commonly referred to in recent weeks as the final four. The Yeomen won last year's tournament held at Varsity Arena, ousting the Ottawa Gee Gees in two games and then downing the Alberta Golden Bears 3-2 in the national championship game.

Hosting this year's tournament are the Golden Bears, who had a bye into the finals even though they lost to Calgary in the West's semi-final round. The west's champions, the Calgary Dinosaurs lost to the University of Quebec at Three Rivers Patriotes (UQTR) in a regional playoff in Three Rivers and therefore will not be in the final four.

Alberta plays number one ranked Moncton Blue Eagles tonight at 9:30 Toronto time in the Northlands Coliseum, while York will take on UQTR Saturday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. All games will be televised nationally, the semi-finals by TSN and the final game by CTV.

The Yeomen came out with as much pop as



**CLEAR THE TRACK, HERE COMES SMALL:** Yeoman Brian Small barrels in on Dalhousie Tigers goaltender Peter Abric in regional playoff action. By downing the Tigers, York earned a berth in the CIAU final four and will play UQTR.



PHOTOS BY ROBERTA DIMAIO

an old bottle of soda in their first game of the series. A truly uninspired game allowed the Tigers to dominate every aspect of the game causing the Yeomen to come up on the losing end of a 5-3 score.

### Yeomen 4 - Tigers 3 (2 OT)

"We were flat," said a disappointed head coach Dave Chambers after the series opener Friday night. "They outhit us, they outskated us, they outscored us."

With York facing elimination in the second game, they came out quickly scoring only 35 seconds into the contest. Dalhousie bounced back from the early setback and had a 3-1 lead heading into the third period, but the Yeomen

tied the score with two goals before the halfway mark of the third period.

The first 10 minute overtime period went scoreless, even though each team had a two minute manpower advantage. In the second period Greg Rolston, York's leading goal scorer during the season, got the winner at 3:42 of the period. It was the fourth game winning goal Rolston has scored in this year's playoffs, the second in overtime and one of the prettiest goals of the entire year.

The third and final game was all York, who led 1-0 after one period and 3-1 after two, before blowing the game wide open with four third period goals making the final 7-2.

"Give Dalhousie credit, they played really

well, said a relieved Chambers, "they really put our backs to the wall."

After playing three games in three days Chambers says his troops had suffered some bruises and used the week to recuperate.

### Yeomen 7 - Tigers 2

Unlike the regional playoffs, the CIAU's finals are single game elimination affairs, with one loss ending the season for the losing team. Although the Yeomen seem to take their time getting motivated, Chambers has no qualms over the set-up of the finals. "It's just like the NCAA basketball tournament, four teams, one big tournament. All it needs is some good promotion."

## 'Stupid' regional playoff format irks coach and columnist

Confusing, ironic and frustrating is the only way to describe the scenario in which the CIAU presented this year's regional hockey playoff format. With losers advancing, winners playing at distinct disadvantages and another club already eliminated but sitting out two weeks with an automatic bye into the eventual championship, the system leaves a lot to be desired. Such are the growing pains of the big time college sport in this country.

The Regional Hockey Championships were a case in point of the inconsistencies of the CIAU. First of all, advancing losing teams to the next round is ludicrous. Both the University of Dalhousie Tigers and Wilfred Laurier Golden Hawks had no business being out on the ice. Those clubs had lost their respective league's championship final series. They not only got a second chance, but York, UQTR, Calgary and Moncton all won league titles yet had no choice but to "re-qualify."

"I've been against it from day one. I never agreed to this. I don't agree with any wild-card teams: that's basketball. It's a stupid system," said an upset Dave Chambers, coach of the Yeomen, concerning the extra playoff. But as Chambers says, the system has its supporters, "a lot of hockey coaches think it's a great idea, because if you lose you still have a chance."

Getting a second chance is one thing, but how about winning and then being penalized? The Yeomen clawed their way to another championship in the very tough OUAA and were rewarded with an extra series on neutral ice. Unfortunately because of costs and commitments, the OUAA designated Varsity Arena as the site of the Ontario Regional. It was tough luck for the Yeomen who have worked hard to develop a loyal throng that now flock to York home games. Crowds of 1500 barely penetrated Varsity's stale air, while a similar gathering turns the Ice Palace into one of the more colorful



MEL  
BROITMAN

buildings in the country. As their record indicates, the Yeomen relish the intimidating nature of their own rink. However York's home advantage was severely hampered away from the cozy confines of the Ice Palace.

"There was a financial consideration of \$8,000 to the CIAU and \$3,000 to the wild card team (Dalhousie) and none of the schools in the OUAA wanted to take the chance. I had wanted it at York all along, but I couldn't say anything because I didn't know if we were going to be in it," stated Chambers.

Dave Copp, president of the OUAA explains another consideration. "We had to sign a contract with the CIAU back in November. At that time half of the teams said they couldn't host it if they won. For instance in Guelph, the Platers (Junior A team) were home two of the three nights and at Laurier, the Hawks don't have first call on the arena." Fortunately for the Yeomen, the Toronto site was nonetheless a satisfactory compromise and in the final analysis everyone is happy. That is definitely not the case in Calgary, where the Dinosaurs were burned badly by the national system.

The University of Calgary Dinosaurs have been a mediocre hockey team for a long time. This year they saw their hopes finally materialize into a divisional championship. With the nationals slated for Edmonton, the Dinosaurs should have boarded the bus to the Alberta capital, bringing with them hundreds of their fans as an added edge. Yet with the Univer-

sity of Alberta automatically qualifying for the championship as the host club, Calgary had to win another series—on the road. Calgary were forced to travel to Three Rivers to play the Quebec league champions. In the past, Ontario and Western teams have quipped that to play in Quebec is to be two goals down before the puck is dropped. The Dinosaurs were swept in two and will watch from the stands as rival U of A 'advance' to the finals.

The University of Alberta will host the CIAU hockey championship for the next three years. A condition they imposed upon the CIAU in signing the contract was to automatically qualify as the host for the first year only. According to them, they need the presence of the Golden Bears in the initial tournament in order to develop fan and media interest for the future championships. In Canada where college hockey is a tough sell, their request was legitimate. Unfortunately the "host-club" concept played havoc with the national playoff format. Hopefully this year will mark an end to any automatic entrances for host teams. As Chambers says, "If college hockey cannot be sold, then the CIAU should get their act together and start promoting the sport and forget about 'host' teams."

Unfortunately there are no easy answers. As University of Toronto Sports Information Director Paul Carson states, "the closer you look at it, the more complex the situation becomes." It appears that the bottom line is weighed heavily with a dollar figure. In attempting to create a solid base of corporate sponsorship and ensure television coverage, the CIAU must compromise. As Carson says, "what might be the best financially, might not be the best in the interests of fair play." Paul Carson's statement is both accurate and diplomatic. Accuracy aside, I'm sure there are some young men in Calgary not willing to be quite so tactful.