

# Sports

## Tiger coach talks hockey

by Kevin Charles Little

Tigers men's hockey coach Peter Esdale made it quite clear Dal will be contenders this year in the CIAU, in an interview with the Gazette this week.

Esdale agreed that Dal's strongest challenge in the Atlantic Conference will come from the Moncton Blue Eagles, National champions for the past two years. Moncton will host the CIAU championships this year (as they did last year). Esdale questioned the decision that will give Moncton the hosting rights for the second year in a row, and felt his bid to host the championships was a good one. He added that Halifax could match any area in the country for its facility and hockey interest.

Dal will lose four starters from last year. They are Ken Bickerton, Don Woodworth, Adrian Facca and Bobby Hull Jr. To replace these players, Esdale has recruited nine possible replacements and has

transfer player from Memorial, Nick Patterson, and a player he is also very high on - Dale Elliot, who played Major A in Montreal last year. Esdale said he may keep more players this year since there are ten trying out with only four positions to fill.

The coach emphasized that college hockey has come a long way in the past ten years. The biggest difference, he explained, is that hockey players are now more concerned about an education. He pointed out a case where a player was selected in the first round of the NHL draft but turned it down to play college hockey in the U.S.. Esdale said Canadian colleges have a hard time attracting quality hockey players. "The best players usually go to the U.S. on scholarships or play Major A," he stated.

Esdale was not enthusiastic about the new policy which will mean that the best fifty Canadian hockey players will receive scholarships worth between \$2-2,500 to go

to catch them," he cautioned, referring to the Moncton Blue Eagles.

When Esdale was asked whether he thought high-scoring forward Brian Gualazzi had hurt the team last year because of his lack of defensive abilities, Esdale pointed out that Gualazzi last year had the best plus-minus total on the team. This meant he was on the ice more when his team had scored than when his team was scored against.

Esdale has found it very difficult to recruit hockey players at Dal ever since he came here, two years ago. Esdale had served as assistant coach and co-coach of the Alberta Golden Bears where he also coached the soccer team. The Golden Bears were the team which beat Dal for the national title in 1979, under then coach Pierre Page. The problems Esdale has encountered in recruiting are due to many factors. One of the major problems is that Dal has one of the highest tuition costs in the country.

However, Esdale is excited about the new Dal rink. "The ice is super," he said. "This is going to make things a lot easier." Esdale had a word of warning for students who are interested in attending Dal games, though. "We had very poor fan support last year, but support from outside was good. Students are going to have a hard time getting in the rink," he warned, "as we are selling season tickets and the rink's going to be sold out since it only holds 1,500." Esdale is also happy with his team's schedule. "We probably have one of the best schedules in the country," he exclaimed.

If there is one thing that pleases Esdale above all else it's that the playoff system has been changed. Now teams finishing one and four will play a best of three series meeting the winners of teams finishing second and third in the finals. The previous system pitted two teams with the best record in a round robin in a sudden death playoff game. Coach Esdale felt this put too much pressure on the team that was favoured to win. He pointed to last year's AUAA playdowns where a team like the UPEI Panthers (with nothing to lose) beat a tight, nervous Dalhousie Tiger squad. Esdale hopes that his Tigers will not only survive the AUAA playoffs but also put on a strong performance at the nationals. If the breaks go his way, they might give Dalhousie their first CIAU title in hockey in the year 1983.

The team will play four exhibition games with Metro Valley Juniors "A" teams to begin the season, at the Dal rink starting at 7:30. On the 24th they play the Dartmouth Arrows, on the 25th the Halifax Lions, on the 29th the Cole Harbour Colts, and on the 2nd of October they face the Halifax Lions again. From October 8 to the 10th the team will host the Lobster Trap tournament, which includes some of the best teams in the U.S., including Wisconsin (who were national champs two years ago and runners up last year). Another item of note has the Tigers taking on the Chinese National Team on Thursday, November 4th at 7:30 at the Dal Rink.

to the College of their choice in Canada. Sam Pollock heads the committee responsible for judging just which players are chosen. Esdale feels these fifty awards will not help to a great extent, and that the idea was not in fact to keep good hockey players in Canada, but to build an Olympic team for 84. "They came out and said they just wanted them for the Olympics," he said. Esdale felt only fifty awards will not have a significant effect on Canadian colleges who lose players to the U.S..

"We will be competitive this year," said coach Esdale in response to a request for a prediction. "We still have good forwards and I think we still have good goaltending. Defence is something we want to continually work at," he remarked. Esdale agreed the team had been going through the rebuilding stages for the past two years, but feels confident his team will be ready to make a serious challenge for the national title. "We've got a lot of growing to do



Childhouse/Dal Photo

one walk on. The walk on is Blaine Kulak from Edmonton. Among the other nine trying out are centerman Tim Cranston who Esdale claims has "tremendous desire". Cranston played the last three years in Quebec Major league. To tighten up the defence Esdale has recruited Andrew Tench. Tench two years ago played with the Dartmouth Arrows and last year played intermediate hockey. Between the pipes Esdale has been fortunate enough to find a replacement for Bickerton in goaltender Darren Cossar, younger brother of forward John Cossar. Darren played in the OHA for the past three years and was chosen for Team Canada in last year's World Cup (comprised mostly of NHL players). In addition the team adds forward Robbie McNeil from the Sydney Academy, Terry Crowe from Amherst, and Louis Fillion, who has been out of hockey for a few years but formerly played for Laval in the Quebec major league. On defence, Esdale is trying out Mike Dagenais, a

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