

Perfect three game stint "brings it back"

Defence the key in Yeomen Classic Cage victory

Mark Zwol

The Excalibur Classic Basketball tournament trophy is back at York University.

Coach Gerry Barker's rampant Yeomen chopped towering Waterloo down to size with a ball-hawking defence to capture the championship game of the tournament last Wednesday night.

Before a crowd of 600, York edged Waterloo 68-63 and became the only team in the tournament's history to take the title three times.

The Yeomen climbed the ladder to the championship game by defeating the University of New Brunswick 88-72 in opening round action, and by upsetting fourth-place finishers Concordia 64-57 in the second round.

Waterloo handed USA entrant University of Southern Maine (a 20-7 team in NCAA division three play), its first loss in the opening round 80-68, and went on to beat fellow QUAA opponents, McGill Redmen, 73-71 in an intense second-round game to reach the final.

Centre Steve Atkins and guard Peter Savich of Waterloo were two of the five all-star selections to receive travel bags, compliments of tournament sponsor, Labatt's Breweries. York forward Tim Rider, who led all scorers with 23 points in the championship game, was also named to the team.

Enzo Spagnuolo, M.V.P. award for his outstanding play. Atkins and Savich led all Warrior scorers with 16 and 14 points respectively.

York outshot Waterloo from the floor, 500 to .441 and held the edge in turnovers, coughing up the ball 12 times to Waterloo's 15. On the backboards, York also gained the edge, 24-22, despite a height disadvantage of as much as three inches per man in the starting line-up.

On the ropes

Waterloo put York on the ropes with four unanswered baskets to cut York's eight-point lead to one, 37-36, before the close of the half.

Tim Rider ran into foul trouble very early in the match, having committed two personals by the 44 second mark of the first quarter. Waterloo forwards, Randy Norris and Paul Van Oorschot, both hovering at the 6 foot 10 inch level, switched off on the high post, leaving a mismatch under the basket between Norris and Yeomen Grant Parobec, who is a scant 6 feet 3 inches in comparison. Rider, meanwhile, had to force his rebounding and was consequently nailed for "reaching in".

Norris was unshakable on the offensive boards for Waterloo in the early going as he cashed in on several of the "open" chances he found.

But it was Enzo Spagnuolo's explosive, lane-ripping drives that carried the Yeomen pitch. As in the previous matches, "No. 4" put on a crowd-pleasing display of both offensive and defensive skills that won him MVP laurels.

Mark Jones, the other half of the Yeomen backcourt tandem, sank a pair of 25-footers, while Grant Parobec added to York's outside game by hitting from virtually every spot in the 30 foot circle.

York broke the game open by stringing ten consecutive points together early in the second half.

Centre John Christenson, who earlier in the season won the M.V.P. award at the Laurier tournament, anchored the tightened Yeomen defense, logging down eleven of the team's 16 defensive rebounds.

The Yeomen could undoubtedly have added to that tally had they been facing a zone defence, but the constant pressure of a man-to-man defence led to a more physical game "underneath". Arms and even elbows were often seen skying well above the ten-foot level of the rim to grab a rebound.

"If a team doesn't execute a zone defence well, you can take advantage on the boards by getting into the holes and scoring a lot of baskets that way. But when you have an above-average team in height like Waterloo, who play an aggressive man to man game, there's usually a lot of physical battles going on to get into position for rebounding," Barker explained.

Foul line trouble

It was, however, as a disheartened Waterloo coach Don McRae said, a "rough night" at the foul line that subsequently did the Warriors in. They had stormed back in the third quarter to pull the game to within seven points, 53-46, after York's opening ten-point outburst. York fell into foul trouble which gave the Warriors the advantage of having a bonus situation at the line. But Waterloo failed to capitalize, missing four crucial foul shots that would have narrowed the Yeomen margin to three.

Overall, the Warriors were one for eight from the line in that see-saw third quarter, and managed to connect on only 10 of 30 chances for the entire game.

To add assault to injury, York rattled Warrior offensive patterns with blitz-like quickness on their defensive play. Tim Rider, who had been in foul trouble earlier, adjusted himself in the second half and was consequently fouled by a seemingly frustrated Warrior unit.

Rider sank his two line shots with less than ninety seconds left to give York a 68-61 lead. The Warriors could hit on only one more basket, but the game was essentially over as the Yeomen employed a "slow-ball"

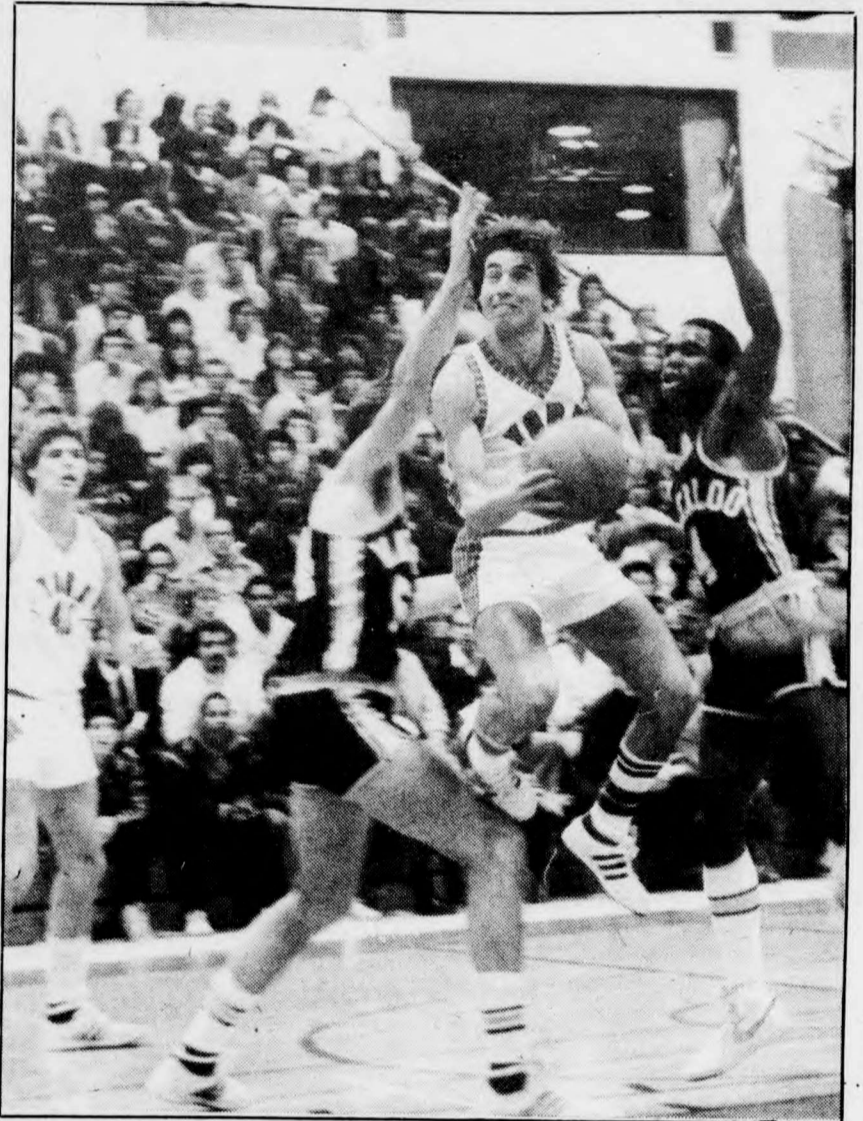


Photo: Mario Scattoloni

Tournament M.V.P. Enzo Spagnuolo "rips one" en route to leading the Yeomen to a 68-63 triumph over Waterloo in the championship game.

weave to kill the remaining seconds.

The tournament victory also marks a new and polished Yeomen team image. They're now a team capable of championship play even without the contributions of their all-Canadian guard, Dave Coulthard, who graduated last spring after five brilliant seasons with the Red and White as the third leading career scorer in OUAA history with 1,133 points.

Life after Coulthard

Coulthard, along with teammate and close friend, Bo Peleck, led the Yeomen to five consecutive OUAA East Divisional titles, four OUAA championships, a five straight CIAU appearances. But the Yeomen, who now add the Excalibur Classic to their Laurier tournament crown along with runner-up finishes in two other tourneys, are touted as the team to beat in the New Year as they ply for their sixth consecutive OUAA East Divisional champion-

ship.

"It's a great feeling to go all the way and win a tournament like this," an elated Enzo Spagnuolo said afterwards. "We came to play and played well as a team. Tim and John played tough under the boards. Grant was hot from the floor. We all contributed. This should give us some momentum going into the new year."

Rebounds In other games, the University of Southern Maine defeated the University of New Brunswick, 77-60, for a seventh place finish... the Guelph Gryphons walked over the Laurentian Voyageurs, 74-63, to take fifth place... other tournament all-stars included McGill's Willie Hinz and Dave Burden of Laurentian... the Yeomen's next home appearance is Tuesday, January 11th, against R.M.C. Game time is 8:15 at the Tait Gym.

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