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5 teams received recognition UNB honors CIAU Championship Athletes

GORDON LOANE

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Less than 12 hours after winning UNB's first ever silver medal at the CIAU hockey tournament in Toronto, the Varsity Reds hockey team returned home to a hero's welcome at the Aitken Centre on Tuesday.

A small but noisy crowd of UNB students chanting "UNB Number One" were on hand to greet the hockey team and pay tribute to all UNB's CIAU athletes in hockey, field hockey, wrestling, cross country and swimming.

"I am extremely honoured as we all are to be here today to honour all of the athletes who have been in the CIAU championships and indeed all of our athletes here at the university," UNB President Dr. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston told the noon hour crowd. "We are so immensely proud of all of you," Parr-Johnston said.

The field hockey team placed sixth this year in what has become an annual trip to the CIAU's. The swim teams both placed an impressive 9th in a very tough field. In addition both the wrestling and cross country teams had excellent performances at the national competition.

For fifth year Varsity Reds hockey player Toby Burkitt, winning a silver medal at the CIAU's was clearly the result of a total team effort. "It was the key to our success all year," Burkitt said. "For us to be successful we had to be going all four lines... It was a close knit group."

But for Burkitt the close 4-3 loss to the Guelph Gryphons the previous night was clearly on his mind. "The Gryphons were going hard to the net all night... They really wanted that game," Burkitt said. "They've been there several times in the last few years, I guess... They got lucky on a few bounces and we came up short."

Clearly, Burkitt could relate to the checking from behind penalty assessed to Billy Wright in the first period of

the Championship game resulting in a game misconduct.

"I know exactly how Billy felt. It happened to me in the game before (against Alberta). It was hard to take," said Burkitt. "Billy is a huge part of our team and he scored some big goals for us."

"It's hard to explain how the team felt when he got thrown out. We tried to rally together and come up with a big effort and I think we did come up with a big effort," Burkitt said. "It was just one of those things... We started to battle, battle, battle but it just didn't happen for us."

While Burkitt is leaving the hockey program at UNB, he is clearly very optimistic about the teams chances down the road.

"They've got a great group of guys left in that room, 14 or 15 guys in their first and second year. The boys have something special to live up to," he said.

"We got there and there are a lot of guys left in that room who can carry it on for great many years. I hope they do it," Burkitt concluded.

Assistant coach Danny Grant felt that V-Reds as a team gave it everything they had all year and at the CIAU's. "We did it the hard way. We didn't have any easy games or teams," said Grant, referring to the long march to the final game, with wins against Moncton, St. Thomas and Acadia and a 4-3 overtime victory over the #1 ranked team in the country, the Alberta Golden Bears.

"In the final game against Guelph if we could have had the first twenty minutes back we would probably be sitting here with the gold medal... I thought we were really tentative and nervous," says Grant.

"The guys wanted to win so badly. They were so close, and I think it took us a whole period to get going," Grant continued.

"We did take a couple of penalties but there were a couple that were really questionable. Losing a guy like Billy Wright, like losing Toby Burkitt the game before, we really lucked out there," Grant said.

"But the guys came back and played

really hard. We were playing against the best college goaltender in Canada supposedly. He made some fantastic saves especially in the third period," Grant said.

Despite it all, Grant is clearly proud of his team. "We've come a long way in this program since I first came here three years ago. It would have been nice for guys like Billy (Wright), Toby (Burkitt), Musky (Scott Muscutt) and Dan (Sherstenka) to leave with a gold medal especially after five years. It didn't happen but they have a lot to be proud of. They played like champions."

Athletic Director Jim Born sees nothing but good things for the future coming out of this hockey season.

"There is no doubt that losing the final was tough," said Born. "But the spin-off, according to Born, should benefit the athletes, the Alumni, the university and the future of the hockey program."

"You saw the number of people who came out and supported us in Toronto not only in the stands. We absolutely outnumbered not only Alberta fans but even Guelph which is just about an hour away from Toronto. We had a lot of people, they were very enthusiastic," noted Born. "I understand that Fredericton was quite lively and enthusiastic about the games as well."

Born hopes the enthusiasm can be translated to the new season that begins in the Fall. "I hope everyone realizes that in the future they can have that much fun here at the Aitken Centre with our hockey program and other athletic events as well," Born told the Brunswickan this week.

"We are very happy with Mike (Kelly), we are very happy with Danny Grant who is just a class guy who came in the interim when Mike Johnston was gone and kept the program going. He has certainly helped out Mike Kelly tremendously and Brad Sheppard as well. It is the kind of group that have done the job as far as coaching goes and we owe an awful lot of credit to Mike, but I think his assistants have done a good

job as well," Born said.

Born was quick as well this week to praise the efforts of the hockey team. "These kids went to Toronto with the idea they wanted to win the gold. Their taste is the silver, but I don't know if

it is as nice a flavour as the gold. I dare say they are going to put an awful lot of effort to try to win that gold next year," he said.

"I think the future is bright for us not only next year but for the years to come," he concluded.

UNB also has a proud CIAU tradition with the field hockey and swim teams who have made what has become an annual trek to the nationals.

The field hockey V-Reds have competed at the CIAU's for the last 8 straight years and numerous appearances prior to this. The team has been consistent in their performance bringing back silver medals.

This year the Reds placed sixth with a young team and head coach Stacey Bean was "very happy with the way our younger kids played."

This year's edition of the V-Reds swim team face tough competition at the CIAU's winning a gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals. Reds head coach

Andrew Cole notes the team has won 3 gold medals in 5 years and attending CI's is almost an annual event with the team doing extremely well.

Cole does realize that "To win gold is just that much harder, just that much of a little extra step."

Swim team captain Iain Tennent comments that "the team gets stronger every year and every year the team accomplishes so much more."

Cole believes the support and enthusiasm that is given by Born and Terry Haggerty (Dean of Kinesiology) for the team's plans and philosophy is great and will only increase the team's chances of success.

Files from Meghan Nebitt and Maria Paisley

UNB named national testing center Reds looking to swim nationally & internationally

MARIA PAISLEY

THE BRUNSWICKAN

If you think small you'll do small. If you think big then you'll go big.

That is how UNB Varsity Reds head coach Andrew Cole sees a plan for the future. He is thinking big by developing a plan that would see more UNB swimmers competing at the CIAU's, national and international events.

If this year is any indication the future for the Reds is looking very bright with 5 CIAU medals, 18-25 swimmers eyeing the Canada Games, a swimmer competing at the Worlds, and being named a testing site for the national team.

UNB went to Brock for the CIAU's

and competed in a high caliber field with 240 swimmers and 11 of them were Olympic athletes. Cole notes medaling at CIAU's is phenomenal as it was faster than nationals referring to Iain Tennent's capturing four medals.

At the CI's the Reds had 27 out of 33 life time best performances. One of them was Michelle MacWhirter who medaled for the first time at a national event. Cole is very proud saying "She knows how to rise to the occasion. She has been consistently performing and outperforming anyone else in the conference for four years." She broke 3 records this year and one of the longest standing AUSA records and won virtually all of the AUSA events. Ironically this was the same pool where Cole won



Michelle MacWhirter

2 gold medals in 1985 and thinks "It's kind of neat to go back there and have our athletes so well in the same pool."

After a week off the Reds have returned to the pool to prepare for the Canada Games. Cole believes attending the Games is "a big step in their development. For us to be a national powerhouse within the next three years we have to have kids going to and competing at that level." He notes that UNB's performance at the CIAU's means they can perform nationally. While Carla Geurts performance proves the Reds are competitive internationally, Cole believes that more swimmers will have to compete at these levels in order for UNB to be considered a national or international powerhouse.

How will the Reds do this? Cole states "The first step is going to Canada Games, so we need as many of our athletes going there. The next year they need to be doing the same thing at a national level where we need medals and finishes in the finals consistently for a larger number of people. In the third year we need to be putting more swimmers on an international team and competing. In the fourth year, the Olympic year, is when we are performing at an international level with a number of athletes."

Cole has received the support of both

Athletics Director Jim Born and Dean of Kinesiology Terry Haggerty for his long range plan and the program's philosophy. "They were very enthusiastic with what I was trying to do and the perspective that I was trying to take. This more global perspective were we are competitive internationally will only increase our presence internationally and nationally. But along the way you will win the AUSA's and have medalist at CIAU's"

"One of the big problems the team has faced is availability of money to do these things is very minimal. It is a nickel and dime operation. But I have some really great support from Born, Haggerty and Maureen Sparks. They are the ones who give me the freedom to do this and that is the key thing. The other big help is the Helen Campbell Foundation which helped us go to our only international level competition," says Cole. Tilden has also assisted the making it possible for them to attend spring training. He notes that without their help half of the team wouldn't have been able to go.

The Reds "have started to receive recognition as people are starting to see a great quality program. People are starting to realize that if they want to compete at an international level this is one of the place to go," says Cole. Recently Cole received a name of a recruit from an Ontario coach because of the program's reputation as one of the best in the country.

Cole is excited about the national performance director naming UNB a national testing site, only the second in Canada the other being in Calgary. The first test will be conducted at UNB in the spring after our Canada Games teams have been chosen.

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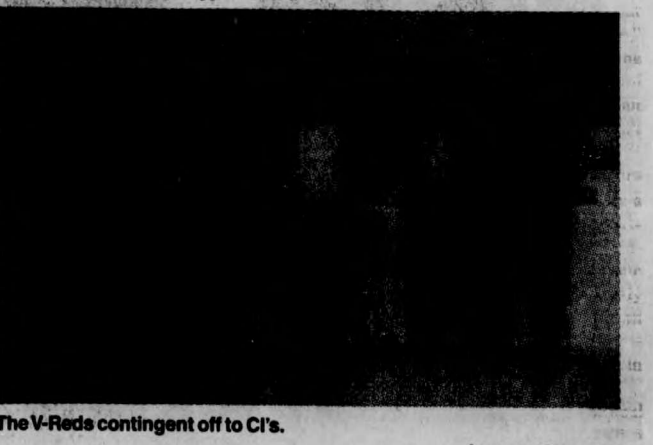
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The V-Reds contingent off to CI's.

ANDREW COLE PHOTOS