

Nothing for their efforts

Tigers lose final games before playoffs

BY TERRY HAWES

As has been the case for most of this AUAA Hockey Season, the Dalhousie Tigers have played well enough to win a share of games, only for their efforts to go unrewarded.

This was evidenced by the boys' last two contests before their playoff match-up with St. Mary's starts on Wednesday. The Tigers went down 4-3 to the Acadia Axemen on Friday and 3-2 to the Huskies on Sunday in a playoff preview.

Despite SMU's perfect 6-0 record against the Tigers during the regular season, the Sunday match was a clear message that the Black and Gold will be anything but a roadblock in the Huskies' path towards the AUAA title.

Simply put — the regular season is one thing, but the playoffs is what it's all about!

Acadia 4 Dalhousie 3
(Feb 11)

The Axemen rallied from a 3-0 deficit in the third period to tie the game and eventually win it in the shootout despite playing their 'B' game for the first 45 minutes.

Dalhousie took the match to Acadia in the early stages as rookie Jeff Sutherland let go of a shot that hit an Axemen skate which got through goaltender Donovan Nunweiler's legs but went only a couple of inches wide of the net.

Chances were few and far between, but Dalhousie opened the scoring at 13:37 as Chris Pittman was left all alone on the edge of the blue line, walked in and snapped a perfect shot along the ice off the left-hand post.

Pittman had a great opportunity early in the second period as he was left all alone again, but he partially fanned on the deke attempt. Acadia's first meaningful chance came later as Drew Kehler stepped in over the blue line and delivered a wrist shot that was gloved by Neil Savary in the Dal net.

The Tigers soon doubled their lead as defenceman Jason Metcalfe's shot was turned away by Nunweiler, only for Denis Aucoin to pot the rebound over the goalie's shoulder.

Acadia decided to switch to Mark Cairns between the pipes for the final 20 minutes. Things didn't start well for him as he misplayed the puck behind the net and Sutherland scored off the feed from Derrick Pyke to give Dal a 3-0 lead at the 5:40 mark.

It should have been game, set and match to the Tigers, but the Axemen finally decided to come out of their shell and were rewarded only 15 seconds after Sutherland's marker with a goal from Eric Hunter — his first of the season.

The Tigers started to go into a more defensive mode and conceded a second goal with under six minutes to go as Barkley Sauter put the rebound in from Chad Cavanaugh's initial shot.

Dal did have an opportunity to put the game away in the final minute as Brian Surette and Kalmakoff came down on a 2 on 1 break. The latter fed the former, but Cairns was there for the pad save.

It would come back to haunt the boys as Russell Hogue levelled the match at three with just 25 seconds left and send the game to overtime.

Acadia defenceman Kirk Furey had the best chance to win it in the extra period only for his shot to ring off the cross-bar. Thus, a shootout for the third successive home game.

After both teams failed on their first shot, Cavanaugh let a quick wrist shot past Savary to give the red and white an early advantage. Metcalfe failed on his attempt and when Hogue was stopped by Savary, it all came down to Pittman.

Pittman tried to deke, but Cairns was there to save and give Acadia the victory, despite being outplayed for much of the game.

Game Puck: First-year centre Chad Cavanaugh picked up two third period assists and scored the

only goal in the shootout for Acadia.

Saint Mary's 3 Dalhousie 2
(Feb 13)

In a spirited contest at Alumni Arena, the Huskies scored two third-period goals to defeat Dal in a preview of the Kelly Division semi-final.

Saint Mary's had the better of the play early on, but Dal opened the scoring midway through the first period. Pittman fed Metcalfe just outside the faceoff circle and fired it past a helpless Mike Weatherbie.

Tempers flared later in the stanza between Dallas Gray of the Tigers and defenceman Steve Gallace of SMU as the teams tried to get their points across for the playoffs. Gallace received the only penalty during the melee much to the disgust of SMU head coach Trevor Steinburg, who could be heard yelling from the bench 'ask the linesman' more than once.

Weatherbie made a blunder that almost resulted in a goal for Pittman late in the period. The SMU goalie attempted to clear the puck, which he did — right to Pittman. He attempted to deke Weatherbie and thought he scored, but the puck failed to cross the line.

When called upon, Tigers goalie Neil Savary shut the door on any SMU scoring chances, including a brilliant pad save off of forward Jason Byrnes.

Sloppy defensive work by the Huskies left the Tigers with a partial 2 on 1 in which Pittman kept it himself and slapped the ensuing shot through the pads of Weatherbie to extend the lead to 2-0.

St. Mary's continued to come out second best in every facet of the game until the late stages of the middle period where despite playing shorthanded, the Huskies caught a break as a Justin Steinbach clearing attempt got through to Billy Manley, who went in alone and slipped the puck under the outstretched Savary.

Scott Gouthro came in for some work in the third period as the game went back and forth. Both teams were treating the contest as a playoff match in itself. But SMU tied the match as a Ryan Davis pass found Steve Gallace, who drilled the shot past the unsuspecting Gouthro.

The Huskies were stepping up their game and took the lead for the first time with 6:30 to go as a carbon copy play took place where Gallace took the puck from the drop of the puck and scored again from another slapshot.

SMU could have padded the lead late as Davis went in alone on a breakaway, but was denied by

Gouthro as he played the deke from the rookie right-winger.

The final chance belonged to the Black and Gold from a Dan Gustavson blast, but Weatherbie was there for the easy glove save — Saint Mary's had hung on for the win.

Overall, a fairly even game that could have gone either way, if this game is any sign of the games ahead, then we're in for something special.

Game Puck: SMU defenceman Steve Gallace scored the tying and winning goals to defeat a game Dalhousie team.

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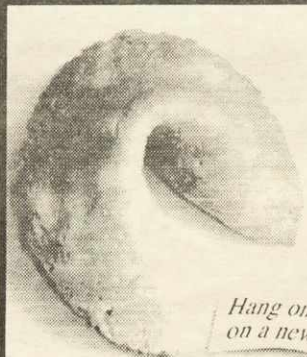
The Story So Far — Dalhousie vs. Saint Mary's

	Dal	SMU
Record	5-21(5)	18-8(5)
Head-to-Head	0-6	6-0
Goals For	14	30

Previous Matches

February 13	Dalhousie 2	@ Saint Mary's 3
January 26	Dalhousie 2	@ Saint Mary's 7
December 1	Saint Mary's 5	@ Dalhousie 2
November 17	Saint Mary's 6	@ Dalhousie 2
November 9	Saint Mary's 4	@ Dalhousie 2
October 12	Dalhousie 3	@ Saint Mary's 5

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