

Ironmen heading to Caledonia Cup

The road to the Caledonia Cup began on Saturday for the Ironmen as they took on cross town rival Fredericton Loyalists in the first round of the playoffs. The first half was a very hard hitting affair with not much in it for either team. The only score coming from a Bruce Jordan penalty kick. In the second frame of play UNB got on track as they began to ruck effectively and push the Loyalists screen. Another Jordan penalty kick put the Ironmen up 6-0.

Ten minutes into the half UNB served a serious blow as they lost standout player Denis Clarke to a shoulder injury. This misfortune seemed to wake the sleeping Ironmen as they quickly scored a try. Inside centre Doug Stewart called a dummy scissor with Rob Wright leaving a gaping hole for Stewart to scamper through for a try. Ian "potato head" Johnston followed this up with a scorching try as he cruised down the sideline covering 70 metres as he collected a misguided Loyalist kick. The final try was scored via the Ironmen's fitness. A high Garry Owen deep in the Loyalists end created second phase ball for the Ironmen which they deftly moved out wide to winger Trevor Moulard who had nothing but brown pasture in front of him. All three tries were converted by Jordan who also had a late penalty to bring the final tally to UNB 27, Loyalists 0. This victory means that UNB has beaten the Loyalists on all three occasions this season; none of them easy victories but each by more convincing scores. This last victory gave the Ironmen the opportunity to play a fresh St. John team on Sunday for the N.B.R.U. Senior A championship.

The match against the Trojans began with everything going right for the Ironmen; the wind and sun at their backs UNB gained a quick 6-nil advantage, courtesy of two fine

penalty goals from the "bearded lawyer" Bruce Jordan. With this quick lead under their belt UNB seemed to lose a little of their fighting spirit giving St. John the opportunity to gain momentum. The Trojans translated this charge in momentum into a Steve Stewart penalty goal and a Mike Carver try. The Carver try came as a result of the ball spinning out of a scrum on the goal line. The try was converted to make the score Trojans 9-UNB 6; this score held up to the half. Unfortunately just before the half Chris Hollett a tried and true lock was lost for the season due to a gash on the knee.

Ten minutes into the second half a Bruce Jordan penalty kick knotted up the game at nine points all. This half saw the sidelines chew their finger nails down to the quick as numerous scoring opportunities for both sides were only to produce raised heart beats.

St. John used the wind to effectively pin UNB in their own end for most of the half. The UNB backs did not get an opportunity to touch the ball much during the game but when they did they moved the ball well gaining significant ground. Missed penalty goals were traded; two of them being aimed at UNB's goal posts deep in their territory. The first of which was directly in front of the posts and only 22 metres out: the attempt to the disbelief of all onlookers and players was attempted by a substitute who had been in the game for a mere few minutes. St. John continued to pressure but UNB held fast; bending but not breaking. Finally with the Trojans deep in Ironman territory the whistle blew with the game tied nine all.

The ensuing coin toss to determine ends for the sudden death overtime period ended with co-captain Mark Walker returning to the huddled Ironmen with disappointing news.

UNB had lost the coin toss and would once again be facing the wind. This ten minute period of play was played deep in Ironmen territory. The Trojan kicker once again had an opportunity to close the door on UNB but failed to capitalize. After four or five minutes of penalty play the Ironmen began to feel that somehow they would find a way to weather the onslaught and come out on top. The Ironmen with some game saving tackles and clearing kicks were able to make it through the first sudden death period of play unscathed. A confident bunch of Ironmen faced the second sudden death period with the wind at their back and the sun going down. The first five minutes were played very tight with no

real opportunities to score. Around the sixth minute mark Bruce Jordan had an opportunity to be a hero when he was faced with a 35 kick for goal. Silence fell as he struck the hard and true only to be blown left. The Ironmen pressed on and with less than a minute to play in the second sudden death period scrum-half Gerry Clayton picking up from a ruck on the 30 metre line made an inspired run for glory side stepping two St. John players only to thwarted in his attempt by a crunching tackle. The fit forwards in support won the ruck and the day as Bob Owen spun the ball out to an on-charging Gerry Guest who popped the ball to veteran Doug Stewart. Stewart with a quick dummy opened a gap for his dive

to immortality. The UNB players were over the moon to say the least.

This victory reserved a spot for UNB in the Caledonia Cup emblematic of rugby supremacy in the Maritime provinces for the first time since 1981 when UNB lost to Pictou county. UNB last won the Caledonia in 1974 by beating Halifax. This was the third successive victory for the Ironmen.

Once again the Ironmen will face the Halifax club for bragging rights in the Maritimes. The Ironmen are spurred on by the words of coach Bob Cockburn "victory at all costs, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival". borrowed from Winston Churchill.



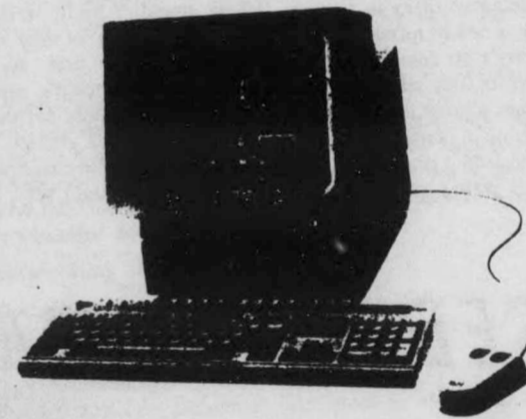
Chris Hallett clears out the competition in rugby play

Photo by Randy Goodleaf

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