

Tigers Denied 2nd AUHC Title

by Greg Dennis
& Sandy Smith

The 1979-80 Atlantic University Athletic Association hockey season ended last Saturday night for the Dalhousie Tigers when the defending champions were ousted in two straight games by the Universite de Moncton Blue Eagles. The Blue Eagles won the first game Friday in Moncton, a wild 10-7 overtime victory, then grabbed their first ever AUAA hockey crown with a 6-0 whitewash the following evening in Halifax.

The Flying Frenchmen, ranked number one in the nation, will represent the Atlantic region at the CIAU finals in Regina next weekend. **GAME 1:** At the J. Louis Levesque Arena in Moncton, the Tigers and the Eagles waged a ferocious battle and went into the overtime period tied at fives. Seven goals were scored in the ten minute extra frame with Roch Bois' third goal of the game—an empty net marker—proving to be the winner.

Playing before 2,500 boisterous supporters, the Blue Eagles were not only representing their university but a proud lineage of franco-phones. Moncton is a city torn between two languages and the French Acadians have long believed that they are mistreated by their English speaking countrymen—a grudge dating back to 1755 when the Acadians were expelled from Grand Pre, N.S. by the British. Displaying signs reading "The team against the system" and "2nd class citizens, 1st class team" the J. Louis wallowed in emotion.

The fans and the Blue Eagles got off to a slow start, however, as the Tigers roared ahead 3-0 in the first period. Kevin Zimmel opened the scoring at 7:44 when his impossible-angle shot somehow found its way behind Moncton goaltender Benoit Fortier. Less than a minute later, Dan Cyr, parked at the edge of the crease, banged in Dal's second goal after a perfect set-up from the point by Moncton native Gary Ryan. Barkley Haddad stretched the Tigers early lead to three with two Tigers and an Eagle in the penalty box. Haddad was allowed a clear-cut breakaway on Fortier and graciously if not gracefully deked out the netminder for the goal.

The Eagles took over from there, scoring two goals before the first period ended and adding three unanswered markers in the second to take a 5-3 lead into the final 20 minutes of regulation play. The Tigers were outshot 36-22 in the two periods and only the sensational goaltending of Ken Bickerton kept the visitors close. Easily the player of the game, Bickerton had Blue Eagle shooters and supporters shaking their heads with his acrobatics and lightning-fast left hand.

His magic continued in the third period as he rejected 15 scoring chances while his



Page and the Tigers will have to wait until next year.

teammates scored on two of their only six shots to tie the game. Fortier was shaky throughout the game and had the goaltenders been playing for the opposite teams, the score might have resembled that of a one-sided football game.

Brian Gualazzi reduced the Tigers deficit to one with his goalmouth scramble marker at 9:34 of the period. Then with 45 seconds showing on the clock and Bickerton on the bench in favour of an extra attacker, the Wizzard struck again with his second goal of the period, snapping Ryan's rebound past Fortier to send the teams into overtime.

The game was held up for about 20 minutes between Gualazzi's goals when Moncton's Francois Robert unleashed a sickening attack on a Dalhousie fan, Steve Crosbie.

Crosbie and an accomplice jumped onto the playing surface; an unnecessary event but one that often disrupts college sports. After having their

jollies, the two were in the process of being removed when Robert charged Crosbie and leveled him with a cross-check across the head that broke his stick in half. Both benches emptied and fortunately nothing serious arose. Robert played the remainder of the game and scored a goal on Saturday.

In the overtime period, the Blue Eagles poured on the power and scored twice in the first three minutes. The go-ahead goal, scored by Alfred Goguen, came after a Tiger defenceman was unended carrying the puck out from behind his net. No assist was given on the play although referee Romeo LeBlanc might have deserved one. Although he called questionable game and was obviously not offended by the sight of splintering sticks, the Tigers cannot use LeBlanc as an excuse for the loss. The Moncton squad was overpowering and except for goaltending they dominated every facet of the game.

After Goguen's goal,

another by Michel Bechard, and a pair of empty net scores gave the Eagles a 9-5 lead, the Tigers staged a small comeback in the last minute of play. Gualazzi completed his hat-trick 14 seconds before Rick McCallum scored the Tiger's final goal of the season. Kevin Gaudet scored the Eagles 10th goal and third into an empty net with four seconds remaining and his team was off to Halifax with a 1-0 lead in the best of three series.

GAME 2: In the end, it was over from the start. Just seconds into the second game of the AUAA championship series, Remi Levesque of the Universite de Moncton Blue Eagles blasted a slap shot past Dalhousie goaltender Ken Bickerton to give Moncton a lead they would never relinquish en route to a 6-0 win over the Tigers in Halifax Saturday night.

The game soon settled into the pattern that would dominate throughout. After Levesque's abrupt goal the Blue Eagles' well disciplined, relentless approach to their fore-checking kept the Tigers off balance from start to finish. The extent of the Moncton discipline was clearly visible in the first ten minutes of the game as they killed six and one half minutes of penalties, allowing the Tigers just one good scoring opportunity. Rick McCallum was stationed to the left of the Moncton goal, but could not convert a centering pass, steering it just wide of a great expanse of open net.

Moncton's scoring ace Francois Bessette amazed the crowd late in the first period when he cruised in on a breakaway and managed to put a back hand shot in the top corner. Dal supporters were ready to send yet another wave of applause over the brilliant Bickerton, who seemed to have outwitted Bessette, staying with his

every move. However, the Flying Frenchman somehow squeezed the puck in under the cross bar, and Moncton led 2-0.

Dal's best scoring chance of the game came moments after Bessette's goal. Again it was McCallum. He crossed the Moncton blue-line and unleashed a screamer that beat goaltender Benoit Fortier cleanly, only to have the puck ring off the post with a resonance that silenced the clamorous crowd.

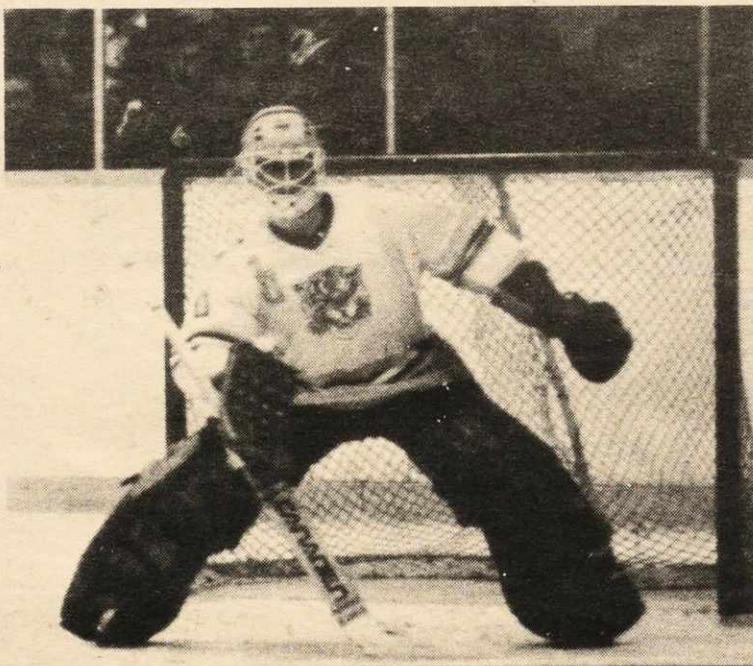
The second period was a scoreless frame with tremendous body checks being thrown by both teams. Groans of anxiety then came from the Dal side of the rink. However, the hustle of the Moncton forwards kept thwarting Tiger efforts to get organized and forced incalculable errant passes. As well, the Moncton defence was strong as they stood up at the blue-line and met any Dal rush that came their way. Once again Dal was forced to rely on "Ken in the Cage" to keep them in the game.

With the score still two to zip the Tigers looked like they might get that break they needed to put themselves back in the contest with 13 minutes to go in the game. As Dwight Houser carried the puck in on right wing, Jim Bottomley, captain of the Tigers, timed his cruise through the slot just right. Slightly to the left of the Moncton goalie he gathered in Houser's pass but could not lift the puck past a sprawled Fortier. As so often seems to be the case when one team comes within a hair of putting themselves back in the thick of things, the next rush by the other team puts them out of the game. Moncton picked up the loose puck after the scramble in front of the net and scooted down the ice with it. Francois Robert took a drop pass just inside the face-off circle and ripped a drive that powered its way between the legs of Bickerton. Eh bien, tout fini.

Three goals within two minutes and thirty nine seconds late in the period rounded out the scoring for the visitors.

Both coach Pierre Page of Dalhousie and U de M coach Jean Perron agreed that Moncton's superior forechecking was the key to the win. In addition Perron said he was especially pleased with his defencemen saying, "When you can limit the scoring chances of guys like Gualazzi and McCallum the way we did, you know we played a great game." Page was most gracious after the defeat saying "They won because they applied the pressure. They're a very disciplined team...the best disciplined team in the league."

"Next year we'll have a good strong nucleus of returning players. We only lose four guys (Adrian Facca, Houser, Bottomley and Bickerton) so we should be strong again next year."



The Puck Stops Here