

A tale of two rookies

By Bruce Gates

The scene: It's just before game time, and the Yeomen basketball team is huddled around coach Bob Bain at the players' bench for some pre-game instructions. After he finishes speaking, the players display their solidarity as a team: They yell out in unison: "Yeomen!"

The players break from the huddle — they are a group of veterans and freshmen who have combined to propel the Yeomen to lofty ranks as Canada's number three basketball team.

Among the starting five now positioning themselves on the court for the opening tipoff are two freshmen who have contributed substantially to their team's overall success so far this year: Wearing number 15 for the Yeomen is 19-year-old Dave Coulthard, a 6 ft. 3 in. guard; and number 33 in your programs is 18-year-old forward, 6 ft. 4 in. Bo Pelech.

These talented rookies have "a ton of potential," according to teammates, and both have contributed their share, offensively and defensively, to the Yeomen's winning cause.

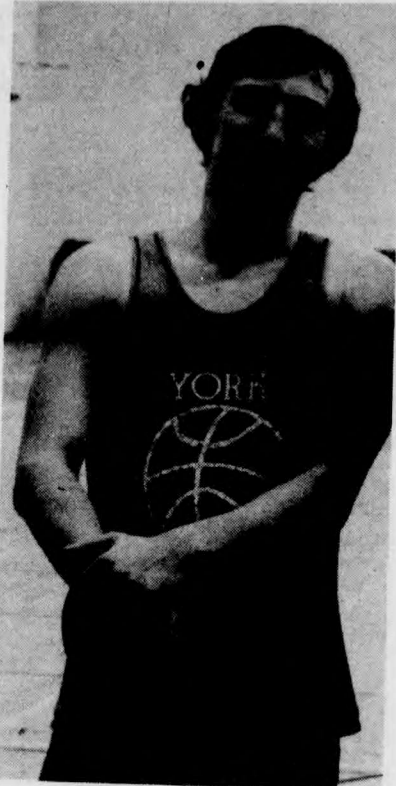
They have played together before joining the Yeomen this year. This past summer Coulthard and Pelech played for the national B team and the junior national team. Last summer was actually Coulthard's second.

Both players played for powerhouse high school basketball teams: Coulthard spent five years with the Glendale Griffins of Tillsonburg, while Pelech played a similar length of time at Runnymede Collegiate in the borough of York with the Runnymede Redmen; and in his final year he helped his team win the city championships against the powerful Oakwood Barons.

University basketball now presents them with a new challenge. "It's a lot faster in university and a lot tougher around the boards," says Pelech.

Adds Coulthard: "The players here are a lot bigger, and the competition is greater."

Despite this greater competition, Coulthard and Pelech have proved they fit right in by making the starting lineup. They are described by their coach as being "complete" players — good on both offence and defence.

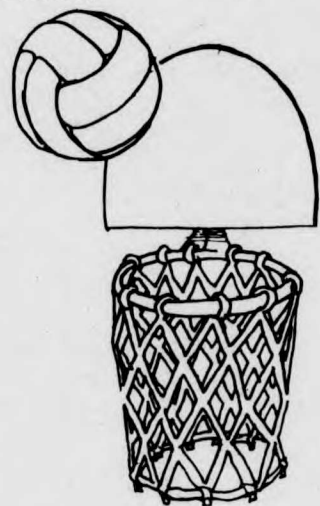


Bruce Gates photos

Forward Bo Pelech

"I was lucky when I was in high school because I had a really good coach (John Petrushchak)," Pelech recalls. "He was helpful in developing my overall playing style."

On the court, Coulthard's and Pelech's playing styles complement each other: Coulthard relies on his swiftness and finesse when driving down court with the ball. And when he cannot penetrate the key area, he uses his pinpoint outside shooting, or passes off to open teammates for the basket.



"Dave is what I'd call a quarterback guard," says Bain. In other words, he controls the tempo of the game and runs the offence much like a football pivot.

"What he does with the ball determines what type of offence we're playing," Bain adds.

Coulthard's defensive skills were also pointed out by his coach: "Dave does a good job of containing guards and he does it in a subtle way," Bain explains.

One moment an opposing player is dribbling down court preparing for a play, the next moment Coulthard is seen heading the other way with the ball in his possession.

Pelech is also swift — and aggressive. He'll drive in through a crowd for a basket, and when the opportunity presents itself, he'll slam the basketball through the hoop. His scoring talents are unquestioned in the mind of coach Bain, but Bain has Pelech playing a strong game of defensive ball against some of the opposition's toughest players.

"Bo is a very deceptive player," Bain says. "He's very rugged and plays very tough defence."

And while playing a more defensive style has cut into Pelech's scoring, Bain says he has Pelech doing that other important part of the game: defending against scorers.

So defence has become one of Pelech's strong points. "When I don't foul out," he quips. But then, more seriously, he adds that occasionally he has tended to pick up some "cheap" fouls during play. "I'm going to have to play with more control out there," he says.

Whatever their individual style, both players play effectively and have blended in with the strong play of the entire team, because winning requires a two-way team effort.

"You have to play both ends of the court," Coulthard says. "You won't win if you don't."

When they aren't playing basketball, Coulthard and Pelech are studying toward their chosen careers: Coulthard plans on getting into the business profession, while Pelech is contemplating either business or physical education.

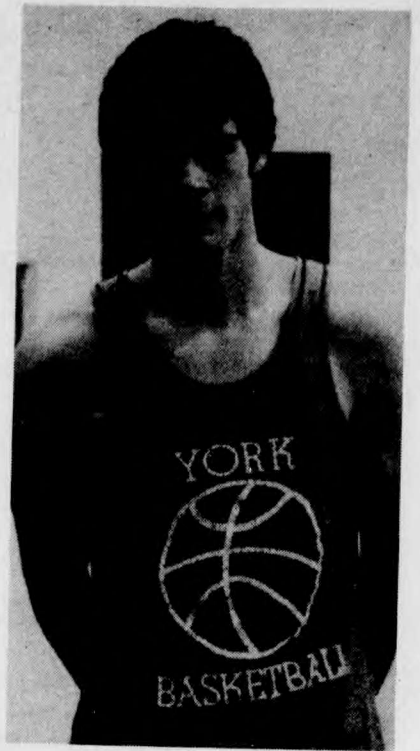
And when they finish their studies at York: "I'd like to play on as many national teams in the summer as I can make," Coulthard says. "And I'd like to keep playing basketball

while I'm at York. But after university I don't know."

Adds Pelech: "I'll think about that later. All we're worried about now is winning our league."

The scene: The game ends. It's another Yeomen victory. And now Dave Coulthard, Bo Pelech and the rest of the Yeomen — veterans and freshmen — must prepare for their next opponents as they concentrate on winning the Ontario East conference, working their way toward what they hope will be a title shot in the CIAU finals this March in Halifax.

And Dave Coulthard and Bo Pelech can continue, contributing their share to the Yeomen's strong play this year, with a little luck and hard work, that shot at a national title may not be too far off.



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