

York declared the "K-car" of athletic facilities

About a month ago, *Ontarion* contributing editor Jamie Killingsworth took off for the Universities of Ontario in a rented car with a tankful of gas. His mission: to compare athletic facilities.

Comparing university athletic facilities is analogous to purchasing a new car. There are many different makes and models to choose from. There are also many extra features available. The major constraint on the kind of car you drive and the features you can add is money.

Wilfred Laurier University: "They're overcrowded," says facilities manager Don Smith when he talks about the state of Laurier's athletic facilities.

But considering the size of the student enrolment, Laurier doesn't do a bad job with what they have. There is a 50m pool with six lanes, and four standard squash courts and two international ones. And there is a decent weight room as well. However, Laurier has limited gym space. There is only one gymnasium with room for only three basketball courts.

But Laurier is *really* lacking when it comes to outdoor facilities. Laurier has none — or next to nothing. There is one small playing field and two outdoor tennis courts. The football team plays their home games at the aging Seagram's Stadium — where they don't always have change rooms. As for the hockey team, they play their home games at the Waterloo Arena.

Laurier has hope though: Smith says there is a five year plan to upgrade the facilities. A major addition would be a "bubble" which would house indoor tennis courts.

University of Waterloo: Facilities at this school are more than respectable. Waterloo's Physical Activities building houses most of the athletic facilities, which include three regulation gymnasiums, as well as two weight rooms, a swimming pool and diving tank and an exercise area.

As for outdoor facilities, there are six multi-purpose fields for sports such as soccer, rugby and

field hockey. There are also three softball diamonds.

The hockey team also has their own hockey rink, the Columbia Ice rink, built in 1983. The football team still plays at Seagram's Stadium — which at one time the University of Waterloo owned but sold to the city of Waterloo for \$1 because maintenance costs became too high.

McMaster University: This is the family station wagon, designed for a family of four. The only problem is that there is another child on the way. "We could expand tomorrow," says Bruce Cochrane, facilities co-ordinator at the McMaster AC. "We're just unbelievably busy."

McMaster is as close to capacity

American," says University of Toronto Sports Information Director Paul Carson. Now Carson wasn't referring directly to Western, but he might as well have been. Western tends to be very American in its approach to athletic facilities management. Varsity here, students way over there.

To a certain extent, this can be rationalized. After all, there are facilities to manage. Western has 2x25m swimming pools, two anti-quatated weight rooms, fifteen squash courts and two racquetball courts. There are umpteen outdoor playing fields for just about every sport. There are also nine tennis courts, six of which are

located in Western's equivalent to the UC — the UCC — while the other is located at Thames Hall. There is also gym space located in the UCC. The surface is a tartan type and it is those gyms which house all of Western's recreation and intramurals. A student who wants to play pick up in Alumni Hall had better try out for varsity. Even the two swimming pools are segregated. Once again, one is in the UCC, the other in Thames Hall.

University of Toronto: This is the tight fitting but very expensive Oldsmobile. The question to ask when examining the University of Toronto's athletic facilities is not so much how good they are — and they are very impressive — but as

but provide preferential use at certain times," says Carson. Which is the case most everywhere.

Overcrowding aside, the University of Toronto still has facilities which would put it among the best in the country. "The good parts are very good," says Carson. **York University:** Compared with all the other facilities, York comes up short. It is the classic K-Car. It will get you where you want to go, but it gets you there much slower and with much less style. Even the athletic department is on record as saying the facilities are inadequate to meet the students' needs.

The main AC at York University is the 22-year-old Tait McKenzie building. Originally, the Tait McKenzie building was built specifically to house all the intramural and recreation aspects of the Athletic Department. Instead it became the main athletic facility for the campus.

"In 1965, there were big plans for this facility," explains David Demonte, Leisure Service Office at York University. "In 1969, the budget cuts came. All plans for further development stopped." And with the budget cuts, the big plans remain just that — models in the Athletic Department's office.

So what York University ended up with was a half completed facility. They had to make to. "I compare this facility to a good high school facility," says Demonte. "The only added feature this facility has over a high school is the squash courts." Which means such things as gym time, court time, and pool usage are limited. "Because of the lack of facilities, we don't allow much pick up time," says Demonte. Classes have first priority, then the varsity team. "They (varsity) are inconvenienced by themselves (the other varsity teams)." After that and usually at night at the intramural activities, which doesn't leave much time for the casual user in between classes. "Everyone suffers from a poor facility," he says.

For instance, the hockey rink was built intended to be used only as a practice rink. "The irony around the rink is it's called the ice palace," says Demonte. "It's no ice palace — there's literally no room for spectators." To get a vision of the ice palace picture Pygmy Gardens with a good and large ice surface, then picture Pygmy Gardens without the bleachers in each end. Add a few rows of stands around the rink,

cont'd on p. 14



ICE RINK FROM HELL: The 'Ice Palace' epitomizes York's pathetic athletic facilities, and has more than a few fans upset.

as you can get, but it has some unique things going for it outside of the heavy usage. It has a whole gymnasium entirely devoted to gymnastics, which separates itself from most athletic departments.

And McMaster's athletic operation is different in the service it provides to its students. "We supply everything," explains Cochrane. "Everything but the shoes." This is no exaggeration either. With the student membership, everything is provided. Not just a towel service. Not only are the basketballs provided, but so are the T-shirts, socks, shorts, and bathing suits as well — as many times per day as a user wishes.

University of Western Ontario: "Some of the schools are very

For the football team, J.W. Little is a pretty good stadium. The stadium also has a 200m track.

As for the other indoor facilities, Western has Thompson Arena — what more could a university ask for? Built in 1973, it houses a first rate hockey rink, a 200m indoor track, and four curling rinks. Other varsity teams play their games in either the Thames Hall gyms or the theatre style Alumni Hall.

Western is different than most schools though, in how it separates use of its facilities. Varsity athletes and other students, for the most part use different facilities — an Americanish approach. For example, there are two weight rooms, both open to anyone. One

University of Toronto Sports Information Director Paul Carson says it's "not so much, are they good enough? But are they big enough for the students?"

The University of Toronto Athletic Centre opened in 1979 at the cost of just over 12 million dollars. It has just about everything that a facility needs. The main question is a quantitative one. "We were virtually at capacity the day we opened," says Carson.

Varsity athletes receive very little in the way of special facilities. They are given free access to a special weight room, but so are other students if they pay a small fee. "By and large, our philosophy is not to provide special facilities



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