

# sports

## Coach defended

My initial reaction to the *Gazette* article (March 11) condemning the Dalhousie hockey coach could only be described as amazement. I recall reading the story and being quite shocked. I do not wish to discredit the author/reporter of the commentary. Enough character-bashing has been done. The reasoning is solely to give an insider's view of the hockey team — an opinion the reporter may not have had the luxury of hearing when he wrote the tale.

I have been a student at Dal for the past three years, so my contact with Darrell Young is limited. I may, however, be able to elaborate on a few theories the writer came up with.

Firstly, "he is an awful coach". For someone who has never played for the man, this is an awfully harsh assumption. The reader must keep in mind that on a team consisting of 25 young adults, problems occur daily. It must be difficult for a man to deal with the egos and attitudes of a group of players thrown together in September. A large portion of Coach Young's job is to deal with each individual in an attempt to make that person the best athlete and student possible. I can guarantee that there are players who have not been happy with some of the actions taken by the coach, but if you can show me a team which never has problems, I will show you a team that won't win.

The casual reader may not realize that the hockey team practices five times weekly from October to the end of February, or longer. Monotonous practices are unavoidable since fundamentals are exercised constantly. Monday skating, Tuesday

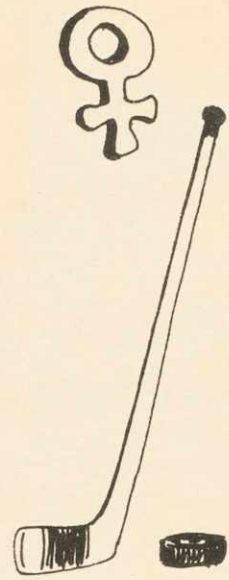
defense, Wednesday back-checking got to be tedious by mid-January. However boring, these drills are necessary, and the players are thankful when the coach allows them some time for fun. These occasions (the day the writer visited the arena), though few and far between, come as a great change of pace. Implementing fun into routine practices is the coach's responsibility.

As far as blaming the coach for fundamental errors, like throwing the puck away blindly, please! Put the blame where it is deserved, on the player, not the man behind the bench.

Secondly, "he garners no respect". Unless the reporter has some sort of inexplicable power, I can't understand how he can make such accusations. As the coach makes decisions throughout the course of the season, there will always be players who disagree. I cannot speak for the entire team, but personally, Coach Young has never crossed me or treated me unfairly, and therefore deserves my respect just as any coach or authority figure does.

Thirdly, "he's a poser". Since the day I met Coach Young, one of his biggest concerns has been with perception. He wants to look good and have his players look good as well. How is his dress code relevant to his ability as a coach? In reference to the national championship, you can bet your life that every player on the team had aspirations of ending the season in Toronto.

Finally, "he's a loser". The sole fact in the entire article was that he has never won a national championship. True. He has, however, consist-



The Dal women's hockey team skated past the Saint Mary's squad 5-1 on Saturday.

ently iced one of the best teams in the country over the past few years. Three seasons ago the team lost a heart-breaking series to UPEI in three games. That talent-filled team probably should have won, but unfortunately it wasn't to be. Some of the blame could have gone to the coach, but the fact remains that the team ran into a very hot goaltender who refused to crack. Last season the team faced a great deal of adversity and problems and sadly never played up to its potential. Questions arose as to where the blame should lie. The obvious choice: Coach Young.

This season was a complete turnaround. The team was having fun again. The Tigers played sporadically through an injury-filled first half before starting to roll after Christmas. In the second round of the playoffs, the team ran into probably the best squad in the country who promptly ended the dreams of a national title. No mention of blame towards the coach was warranted. The consensus on the team was that they were outplayed by a team on a

mission. Perhaps the Dalhousie Tigers could be labelled underachievers. Coach Young, however, has never claimed to be the best coach in the world, and would himself probably do some things differently in retrospect, but then again, who wouldn't?

As I stated earlier, my sole purpose is to give a point of view that might be a little more knowledgeable. Okay, so Darrell isn't Toe Blake,

but he isn't the worst coach either, and doesn't deserve the bashing he received. Hiding behind a pen and paper, or a computer, a person can compose just about anything I assume. Perhaps the author should have exercised some caution and a little common sense before attempting to discredit a man who has given his best to Dalhousie University.

Kevin Meisner

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