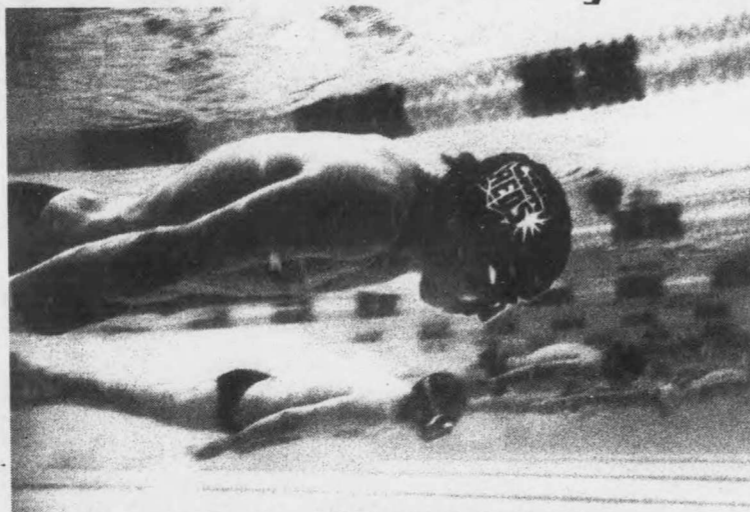


Swimming

V-Reds dive into a new year

by Mike Drost
Brunswickan Sports

The UNB Varsity Reds opened their AUA season with both the men's and women's team bringing in wins over Mount Allison. The score for the men's division: UNB-76, Mt. A-17, and for the women's division: UNB-70, Mt. A-23. "There were some surprisingly good swims," observed Coach Bob Connon. Newfoundland native Michelle McWhirter qualified for CIAUs by making the standard times in the 50m freestyle and the 100m backstroke set at the beginning of the year.



A V-Red leads the way as UNB defeated Mt. Allison in swimming last Sunday. photo by Mike Dean

This was UNB's first meet under new coach Bob Connon, who is replacing Andrew Cole. Connon has had several years coaching experience at the university level. He has coached at Mt. Allison for four years, and also at Acadia for a year. He only had positive things to say about this year's team and coaching here at UNB. "I enjoy coaching at the university level very much, and this has to be one of the hardest working teams I have had the fortune of coaching."

Sunday's meet against Mt. A has set UNB on the precipice of a great year. There were many great swimmers turned in by the returning veterans, and also by some of promising rookies recruited by last year's coach, Andrew Cole. Adding more depth to the team this year are rookies Chris Jones of Toronto and Josh Ballem of Charlottetown, PEI. "We have about 21 men and 13 women swimming presently," said Connon, "and all of them are handling an extremely high workout demand".

Coach Connon commented on a tough season: "Right now we are concentrating on an aerobic base training schedule, with about nine practices a week including morning weight workouts. My goal this year is to concentrate on being strong at the CIAU championships. This is also an Olympic year, so the Olympic trials will be another important meet for some of the swimmers." Coach Connon feels confident about the swimming ability of his swimmers: "I am confident that there are about 12 swimmers here who have the potential to get to CIAUs, and I will be doing everything I can to see they get the training required to get them there. I will also be taking about 12 swimmers to the Olympic trials at the end of March".

Besides an intense ten day training camp in Pine Crest, Florida during the Christmas Holidays, UNB is also going underwater this year with a *Video Scope*

Sub Surface Visual Feedback System. This new underwater camera allows Connon to evaluate the skills and strokes of the swimmers, and also work with the swimmers on correcting problems. It is also used to quantitatively compare the results of other swimmers across Canada in different phases of their training.

This coming weekend (Oct. 28-29) should provide some very competitive swimming as UNB hosts the first AUA Invitational meet. All the teams in the AUA are expected to show, and there should be some fierce competition, especially with long time rivals Dalhousie. Bob Connon anticipates great results this weekend, and is very anxious to meet the competition. "I am pleased with my swimmers, and I am looking forward to this weekend. We are right on track in terms of training and it shall be very competitive."



Seeing as how most of the varsity teams at this benighted university were part of Homecoming, it seems like a good idea to discuss just how the sports events of that 1st annual alumni money grab went. After all, to honour our alumni's wallets, UNB served as host for two basketball Fall Classics, hockey's River City Shootout, three soccer games, a cross country meet, and even a swimming event against Mt. Allison. By and large it went well, but there were a few UNBisms present. What follows is the bad and the good of Varsity Reds Homecoming.

The weekend began with the men's and women's basketball Fall Classics. Unfortunately, calling either of these events is a gross misnomer. It is sad to realise that the once mighty Red Bloomers have fallen to the point that they are forced to invite a non-university club team to their tournaments. Yup, that's right, the women's basketball V-Reds were reduced to inviting the Maritime Old Stars to their tournament. This, of course, has long been a practice of the men's volleyball team, but to see it from women's basketball is indeed a humbling sight. Granted, it was nice to see Jennifer George, Krista Foreman, and Sue McMaster back performing in The Pit, but the old Bloomers commanded enough respect that they could easily fill a mere four team tournament. Now, instead, they can only get UPEI, Laval, and the Maritime Old Stars.

Even more sad, however, was watching the team's play in the tournament final against the Université de Laval Rouge et Or. The team played hard, and at times well: at halftime they down by only a single point. In the second half however, they simply didn't have the tools. When the Rouge et Or began extending their lead, it became obvious that the V-Reds had no real way to get back in the game. I don't mean to sound too critical, since this is not, in fact, a bad team. It just saddens me to be finally forced to acknowledge that the V-Reds' days of dominance, of steamrolling their opposition à la the field hockey team, are over. At least, they're over for now. This is, after all, almost a perfect example of the old cliché rebuilding year. Plus, with Joyce Slipp as head coach, the rebuilding process won't take long, possibly not even a full year. Slipp is, quite justifiably, the single most respected person associated with UNB athletics, and with her at the helm the women's basketball team will undoubtedly rise out of mediocrity in a hurry.

The men's basketball Fall Classic is the opposite case, especially in the final, where they annihilated Laval 90-54. I've watched a lot of 30 point blowouts involving the Red Raiders/Varsity Reds, but this is the first time I've ever seen UNB being the team doing the dismantling. However, the V-Reds aren't nearly so good as the score indicates. Laval sucks big time, and as such it is way too premature to expect this type of dominance from the V-Reds once the regular season begins.

The real problem with the men's Fall Classic is that it was a tournament that had no winner. On Friday night UNB played against Waterloo, while UPEI played Laval. Both UNB and UPEI won their games, so it should be expected that they would meet in the final. They didn't. As such, the tournament had no winner. The ostensible reason given was so that the teams involved could play against non-conference opposition. However, in UNB's case, if you really don't want to play against UPEI and they don't really want to play against you, why bother inviting them to your tournament? What we ended up with were a bunch of meaningless exhibition games, so calling it a Fall Classic is misleading and essentially false advertising.

The real farce of the weekend was the River City Shootout between UNB and STU. Neither of the games in this little set-to counted towards the standings, although the many misconduct penalties will indeed count towards suspensions. So why have the tournament? Sure, UNB vs. STU is an attractive draw for Homecoming, but couldn't it have been arranged with the AUA for the games to count? Instead, we got two teams beating the crap out of each other for no reason. The powers that be for this tournament have to wake up and smell the coffee. UNB vs. STU is not a friendly rivalry. The two teams genuinely dislike each other, and should under no conditions be playing exhibitions. The sickest part of the whole weekend was the shootout between the second and third periods of Saturday's game. While both teams were showboating throughout the weekend, watching the three STU players intentionally try to injure UNB goalie Frank LeBlanc with point blank slapshots to the head was a new low in UNB/STU hockey relations. Fortunately, no one did get hurt, but if this farce is continued it will merely be a matter of time.

I don't have too much to say about the soccer games. Both the men's and women's teams put on a thoroughly enjoyable show, although it was disappointing to watch the women lose for the first time in their brief history. Both the men's and women's games on Sunday were played under a steady rain, and it appears that neither team—although the men did win—is a mudder. Because of the rain, many of the spectators retreated to the shelter of the Aitken Centre concourse to watch the games. At least they tried to do so, but Gord LeBel's AUC Police elected to kick them all outside into the rain because Fall Convocation was going on at the same time. Apparently, only those who were at the AUC for convocation were able to watch the games, those who were there to watch the soccer had to do so outside. It almost makes one hope that someone will get seriously ill with pneumonia caught at the games, just so that they can sue the asses off of these brainless assholes at the AUC. Of course, I was prevented by one of our illustrious Campus Police from walking across the Main Gym floor to do an interview because my sneakers might scuff the floor. Further proof that it is dangerous to give even a semblance of authority to the weak and feeble minded.

The cross country races were both enjoyable. For the many of you who have never been to a cross country meet, they are far more of a spectator sport than you might think. This is because there is a major interactive aspect of watching a race, since you are forced to run from point to point to follow the flow of a race. Unfortunately, however, the UNB Open was the most disorganised cross country meet I have ever attended. No maps were distributed so that spectators could know where the race was going. In fact, some of the runners did not themselves know the route, or even how many circuits they had to run. The starting line is not the right place to be informing runners of where the first turn is, that should be sorted out long before. In fact, it should not even be necessary to explain the course route to the runners, since the course markings should be clear enough to remove all doubt. At the UNB Open, they weren't. The start/finish lines weren't even clear. The starting line for the women's race was just a thin line drawn with a stick or toe or something in a gravel path. I never did figure out where the men's starting line was. The finish line was marginally more clear, but even still I was forced to ask exactly where it was. Something this important to a spectator's appreciation of a race should be far more clear.

Unfortunately, I got the times mixed up for the swim meet against Mt. A and thus missed it completely. However, the UNB AUA Invitational will be held at the Sir Max Aitken Pool this weekend (the finals beginning Saturday at 4:00 p.m.), so I should be able to find something to whine/bitch/complain about then. Toodies.

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