

# Weak division puts Yeomen at a disadvantage

The buzzer sounds, and a jubilant bunch of York Yeomen celebrate yet another basketball victory. Despite another solid effort by Bob Bain's gang, a tinge of emptiness resonates from the Tait McKenzie Athletic Centre. The reality of the matter is that winning has become automatic whenever York takes the floor against a regular season opponent. The OUA East is Canadian university basketball's version of the NHL's Norris Division. The Yeomen may sit eternally upon their throne, but their loyal supporters, the fans, are in fact the big losers.

It is extremely unfortunate that the Tait McKenzie gym rarely witnesses a quality game. With the one possible exception of Toronto (who took York to overtime in last year's East final) York never allows an opponent within 10 points. A margin of 30 to 40 is commonplace. Often times the Yeomen "coast" to a blow-out finish. Matchups with RMC, Ryerson, Queen's, Ottawa and Carleton have become a joke.

Not just the fans have suffered. The Yeomen have also paid a heavy price for the lack of regular competition after the Christmas tournament schedule. It is no wonder that York had traditionally come up on the short end of sudden death games in the national playdowns. After 16 encounters which might provide just a solitary "contest," the Yeomen then must clash with the best in Canada. Coach Bob Bain is well acquainted with the problem of competition in the OUA East. "It has to hurt us to the extent that we're not geared to 'tough-game' competition down the stretch," says Bain.

On the other hand, University of Toronto coach Brian Heaney thinks the league's weak label is a misnomer. "It has been created by York's dominance of the conference. I just don't view it as a league that doesn't have any good teams," states Heaney. Well, it's easy for Heaney to say. He is employed by a basketball program that hasn't beaten York since January 8, 1974. His club has already lost home games this season to the Yeomen and Laurentian. York—doesn't lose home games.

Since 1978, Bob Bain has a 99-3 record in OUA regular season play. York's three losses all came on the road by the slimmest of margins. York's record is truly a tribute to the players and Bain, but not to the league.



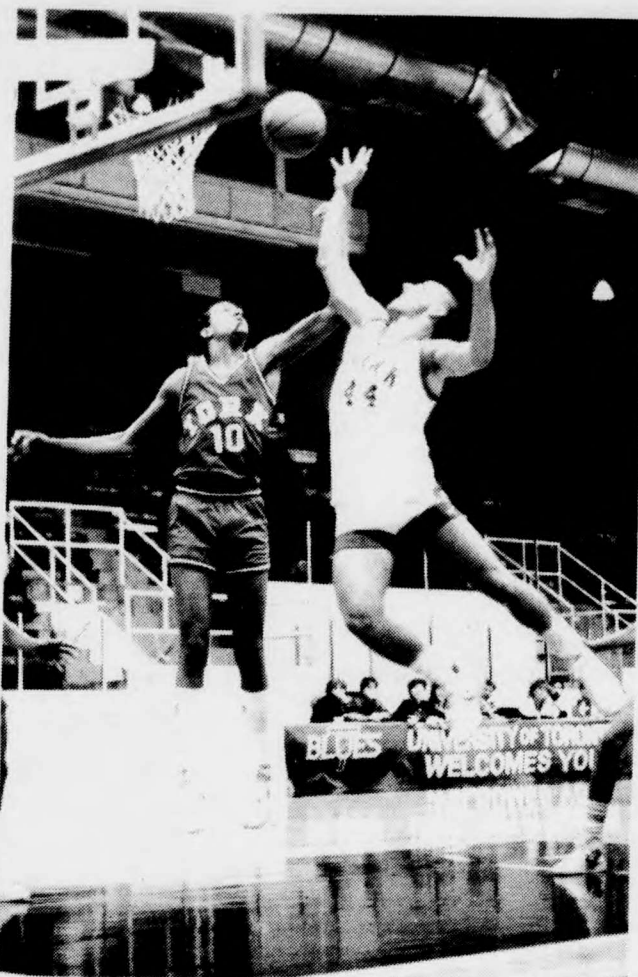
MEL BROITMAN

Sadder yet is that there is little hope for change. "We had hoped that they (OUAA) were going to re-align this year so we could have had a home and home against the other division. Unfortunately I don't think it's going to be a reality for the near future," says Bain. The other division (West) provides the only consistent entertaining university basketball in the province. All seven teams would likely finish in the top three in the 'OUAA Least.' If the York fans could see Waterloo, Laurier, McMaster et al, then "two" teams would provide exciting basketball instead of just one.

York's gym has also hindered the possibility of quality basketball coming to the campus. Coach Bain explains, "Another frustration is our facility. York more than anything else is held back by the lack of facilities. As a result, we cannot host basketball regionals or national championships." Meanwhile the U of T attracts American colleges and regional playdowns to their Varsity Arena. And this is the same club that hasn't beaten York in over 12 years.

Alas, some hope blazes on the horizon. The Yeomen basketball tournament that was last played in 1982 will reappear next year. Canadian powerhouses Saskatchewan, Waterloo and Brandon will help us forget the Ryersons and RMCs. Also this spring, the East will host the OUA championship game, with the Yeomen a virtual certainty to host the confrontation against the best from the west.

In the meantime, we'll have to settle on appreciating the remarkable record that Bain has accumulated. It is not York's fault that no other serious challenger has emerged for the OUA East title. Despite the easy home-court wins, it is still a thrill to watch the players develop and constantly improve. Maybe we should forget the OUA. For basketball connoisseurs, Bob Bain can always sell tickets to his practices.



ROBERTA DI MAIO

**STRONG WEST:** The only chance the Yeomen have to play the tougher western division teams is at tournaments, like this one at the University of Toronto.

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