

Red Devils end season on low note

Loss to UPEI in semi's eliminates Red Devils

by Frank Denis

Unless you took an extended spring break and just got back yesterday, you've no doubt heard that the Red Devil hockey team was eliminated by the UPEI Panthers two weeks ago. The Panthers swept the best of three AUAA semi final in two straight games. Following a four hour marathon game in Charlottetown, which the Devils lost 6-5, the series shifted to the Aitken Centre where the Panthers upset UNB 4-2.

While losing to a weaker team is no way to end a season, Red Devil coach Mike Johnston says the year was a successful one.

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Red Devil coach Mike Johnston

"Overall it was a successful year because we played consistent hockey throughout. Our record in the first half (10 wins and 3 losses) was almost identical to our second half record of 9-3 and 1 and that shows consistency.

I was happy with our overall record of 19-6-1 and think it maybe should have been

better by a game or two. We played most of our games well enough to win and in the end we did win."

However overshadowing the whole year is the loss to UPEI and the circumstances surrounding it.

In the first game of the series coach Johnston was given a game misconduct for

allegedly becoming involved in a shoving match with Panther forward John Nelson. The misconduct penalty also meant Johnston was not permitted anywhere near his team in game two. And that was a big factor in the Red Devils early exit.

"We should have been able to beat UPEI, so obviously your disappointed when you don't achieve what you could have. If you lose to a better team it's one thing, but they weren't the better team at that time. I'm not happy with the season and the way we finished. I think we should have been in the final and possibly the national finals." said Johnston.

Johnston is already planning

for next year with a recruiting trip to Ontario this week. The Red Devils will be losing only three players, Murray Nystrom, Dominic Niro and Jim Landine all of which are forwards which means Mike Johnston will be concentrating his efforts in that area and specifically looking for a goal scorer.

"I'll be looking for some good all round players and hopefully add a little more offence to the attack. That was a weakness this season and really showed up in the final series against UPEI when we didn't score on many of our chances."

As far as next year goes Johnston is optimistic. "I think next year we'll be a top team and with the addition of a few players should have a good shot at reaching the league final and the national championships."

With the series win over UNB, the UPEI Panthers advanced to the AUAA hockey finals against the Acadia Axemen. The Axemen won the best of three final with a 12-1 win at home in the first game and then a 4-3 double overtime victory in Charlottetown last Saturday. The Axemen will be competing this weekend at the national championships being held in Toronto. The other three teams also vying for the championship are Wilfrid Laurier, Alberta and the University of Quebec at Three Rivers. All games will be televised on TSN.

Brian Wilson, Chris Somers and Rob Knesaurek had reason to smile in the regular season as the Devils went 19-6-1.

Sherry Secord photo



Raiders season comes to a close

by Anand Irrinki

The UNB Red Raiders finished yet another disappointing season with 4 straight losses. The Raiders finished their season against 3 playoff bound and nationally ranked teams. A season which once seemed full of promise ended with many marks in the loss column for UNB. One question that must be asked is where is UNB's men's basketball program heading?

During the first weekend of March Break UNB placed host to the University/College of Cape Breton. Cape Breton learned from last year's upset loss to UNB and ended up sweeping UNB's final home games. The first game was close but the Capers won 83-77. The second game was just the opposite as UCCB took it strong to UNB and came out on top 104-68.

Last weekend, UNB travelled to Nova Scotia where they were greeted by unfriendly hosts. Acadia was the first team the Raiders visited. The Axemen beat the Raiders by a score of 104-74. UNB's second game was against the St. Mary's Huskies. The Huskies took their final regular season game quite

seriously and humbled UNB 96-78. These 4 losses, along with a plethora of others during the regular season, added up to give UNB a final record of 4-16. This placed UNB 7th in an 8 team league.

The burning question on all Raider fans' minds is why can there not be a successful university basketball program in Fredericton (let alone all of New Brunswick) when there is success at all other levels. This question cannot be answered in one line and it cannot be answered without stepping on some people's toes. One reason the Raiders are not successful is because of poor recruiting. UNB has gotten many talented players over the past years, but have these players filled any specific holes. For years UNB has lacked size, but for some reason the Raiders choose to recruit small forwards and guards. With Ryan Goldie eligible to play next year, UNB looks to have added more size, but one wonders whether this is enough.

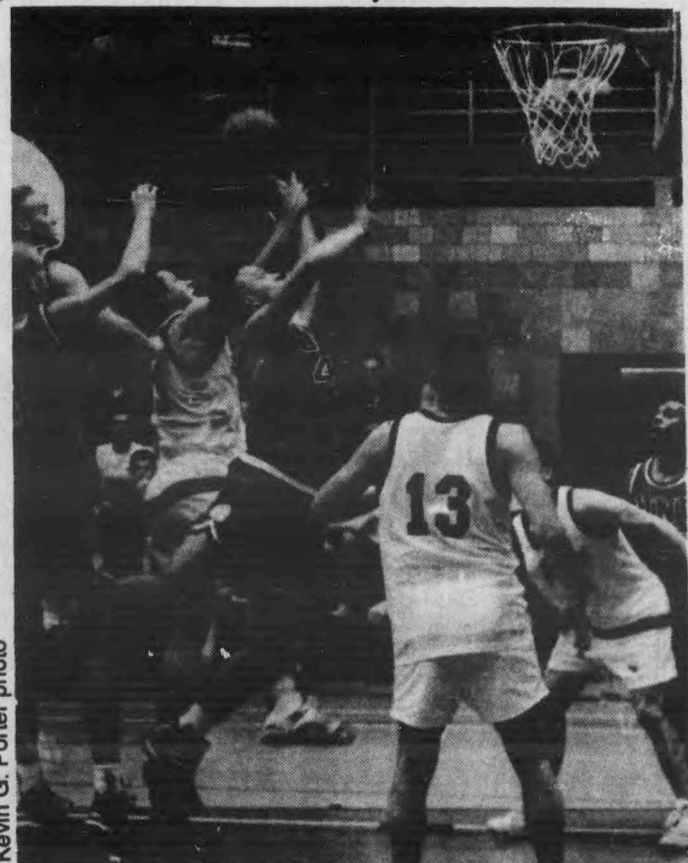
Another problem surrounding the Raiders is the players' attitudes and the community attitude towards the team. When I first began writing for the Raiders, I was amazed at

how negative everyone's attitudes were towards them. It is hard to generate any sort of winning spirit when your fans are constantly chastising you. Unfortunately, many of the Raiders carry this losers aura with them. Some of these players do not even care if they win or lose. One must wonder whether these players realize that they are no longer playing intermural basketball, but are playing at the ultra-competitive university level.

The final reason UNB basketball is not successful is a sensitive issue. I have heard many complaints about this problem throughout the year, but never has anybody stood up and voiced their opinion. I believe the main reason the men's basketball program is going no where fast is the coaching. Coach Phil Wright is probably the nicest guy in the UNB Athletic Department, but he is just not getting the job done. Doc may understand the technical aspects of the game perfectly, but he does not seem to have the ability to apply these points during game situations. Throughout the year he has been second guessed about player substitutions and other choices. His team's lack of an

offense has been constantly criticized. If Doc wishes to lead this team to more victories he must earn the respect of all his players and motivate them to work harder than ever. Only then, can Phil Wright lead the Raiders to the play-offs.

To conclude, I would like to thank all those people who made my job easier. I would also like to congratulate the Bloomers on a fine season. Good luck to all students on their final exams and we'll see you on the hard wood next year.



Kevin G. Porter photo