

Tigers lose in AUAA semi-finals

SMU captures title, birth in CIAU tournament this weekend

BY SUMANT KUMAR

The Dal Tigers were the hottest team going into last weekend's AUAA basketball championships. However, when it ended, it was the perennial underachievers, the SMU Huskies, who had the banner, while the Tigers were left to wonder what went wrong after their semi-final loss.

Dalhousie opened the action on Friday night against the UCCB Capers, a dangerous team when star forward Dave Phillip is on his game.

In the first half, the Tigers came out flat — in fact both Phillip and Tiger forward Doug Newson, who had scored 39 points in his last game, failed to score. Dal shot 28 percent in the opening frame and were lucky to be only down by 2 at half.

As the second half begun, things looked even worse for Dal, as UCCB scored the first six points. With nine minutes to go, they were up by nine. UCCB had the chance to bury the Tigers' season for good at that point, but they let Dal back into the game by turning the ball over on multiple occasions. UCCB had 28 turnovers as a team, with their star point guard, Stephen Nelson, having 12 of his own.

Due to UCCB's inability to close the game out, Dal came back, and a Benny Edison jump shot with a minute left gave the Tigers a 66-64 lead. Edison managed to sink a basket with 7 seconds left to give

Dal a narrow 69-66 victory.

Tiger coach Tim McGarrigle said it best during the post game press conference, when he nervously stated that "we survived that one".

Mike Wall led the winners with 18 points and 12 rebounds, while Edison had 17. The player of the game was David Mullally, who had 10 points and 10 rebounds. Kirt Mombourquette led the Capers with 18 while Phillip contributed 14.

After this narrow escape, the Tigers had to play a lot better in their semi-final match-up against arch-rivals SMU. The Tigers had everything going for them. They had won six straight, while SMU had recently lost to UPEI. The Tigers also beat the Huskies last year in the playoffs. In addition, SMU had not won a playoff game since 1993, a fact that had to be playing in their minds.

However, to the surprise of the majority, this game was never really in doubt as the Huskies dominated inside and outside to hammer the Tigers by a score of 83-66. Dal was able to jump out to an early lead and with about 8 minutes gone led 15-13.

But then SMU took over. It began with Husky forward Patrick Toulouse having his way inside, and when Dal closed off the middle, guards Jonah Taussig and Kurt Henry made shot after shot from the perimeter.

When halftime came, SMU had a 49-33 lead.

The second half was much the

same, with the SMU front-court being all but unstoppable. Every time the Tigers looked like they may have made a great defensive stop inside, Taussig came up with a clutch play.

Dal never got within 10, and the Huskies cruised to a 83-66 victory.

Fifth-year forward Mike Wall led the Tigers with 14 points and 13 rebounds in his final game. Danny Stone also had a strong game with 14 points. Jonah Taussig led the Huskies with 22 points on 9-14 shooting, while fellow guard Kurt Henry dropped 18. Toulouse controlled the paint with 17 points and eight rebounds.

After their semi final win, the Huskies defeated the Acadia Axemen in Sunday's final to earn a birth in this weekend's CIAU championships at the Metro Centre.

Also on Sunday the two wildcard bids were announced, with one being expected and one being a total disgrace. The Victoria Vikings, who had been number one or number two all year, received a free pass to the CIAUs. The other wildcard, smelling of the typical Ontario favouritism which last year gave Mac's Titus Channer the player of the year award over Dal's Brian Parker, went to McMaster instead of Concordia.

Concordia was a team which did not shy away from the tough opponents. In fact they won three tournaments, including Dalhousie's, which featured five top ten teams.

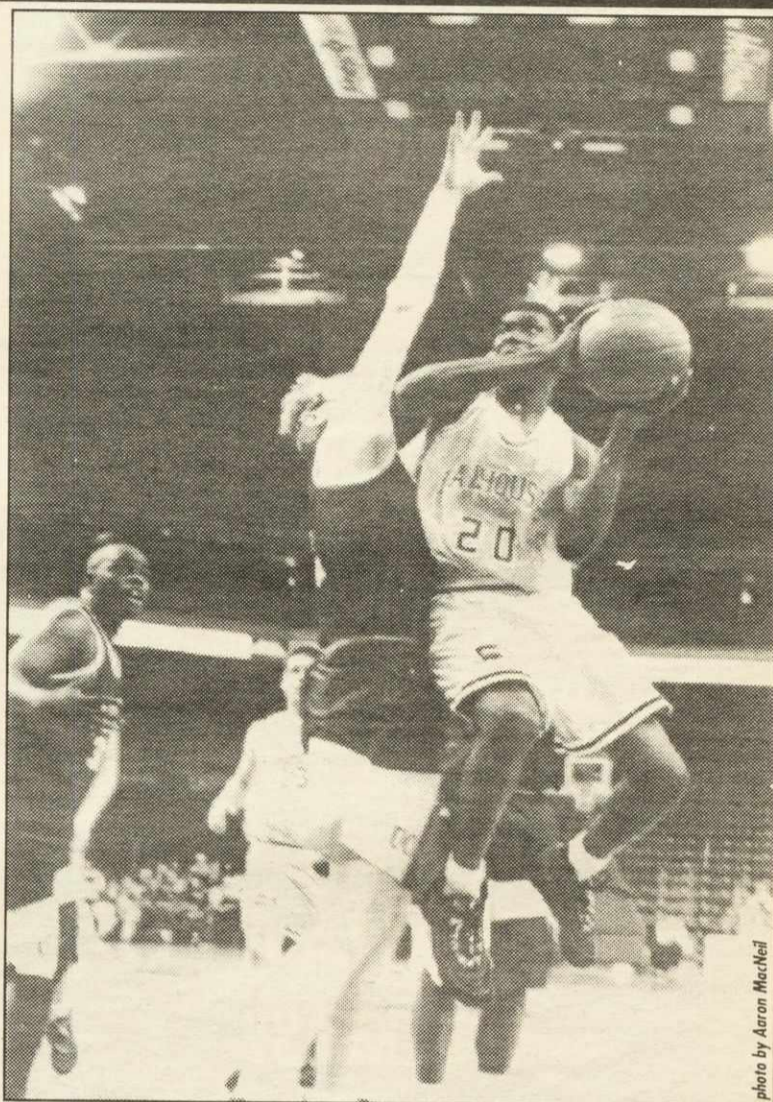


photo by Aaron MacNeil

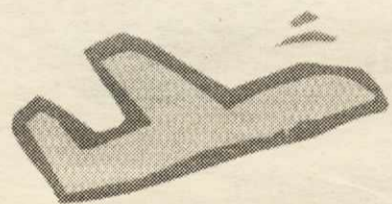
THE SOUR SMELL OF DEFEAT: Dal loses to SMU in AUAA semi-final.

McMaster, on the other hand, shied away from tough opponents. They only played 8 non-conference games versus CIAU competition, with six of these game going against patsies like Manitoba, Winnipeg, Queen's, and York. Most of their non-conference games took place in the United States, so they would not count against their record — or their wild card chances.

The CIAU tournament kicks

off Thursday night with the opening ceremony at 8pm. The first game goes at 1pm Friday with Alberta facing the surprising Ryerson Rams, and then at 3pm Brandon faces Bishops. At 7pm the Huskies face the Western Mustangs, and at 9pm Victoria goes up against McMaster.

Hopefully the Huskies will play as they did this past weekend, and have a strong showing.



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AUAA Basketball All-Star Teams



First Team

Doug Newson, Dalhousie
Jonah Taussig, SMU
Fred Perry, St. FX
Jan Trojanowski, Acadia
Dave Phillip, UCCB

Second Team

Mike Wall, Dal
Patrick Toulouse, SMU
Jermaine Bruce, MUN
Jason Dayman, St. FX
Dave Lowe, UNB

Player of the Year:

Jan Trojanowski, Acadia

Rookie of the Year:

Mike Kierstead, UNB

Coach of the Year:

Dave Nutbrown, Acadia

Assistant Coach of the Year:

Andrew Cook, Dal