

# Coach Yarr on the Tigers

## "The best team ever coached"

by Tom Barry

What could be one of Dalhousie's most successful years ever in college basketball, might also be the biggest year ever for Tiger coach, Al Yarr. His "elusive butterfly", the M.I.B.C. championship, has evaded him since his debut at Dalhousie seven years ago.

Yarr, unfortunately, is the object of criticism from many Dalhousie basketball fans as a result of the disappointments in the last three years.

However, need it be recalled that when the Dal mentor arrived in the fall of 1963, the Tigers were the "patsies" of the M.I.B.C.? His energy and vigour have been responsible for the Tigers' notoriety among opposing universities.

Yarr is by far the most active recruiter among M.I.B.C. coaches, and has a reputation for having knowledge of every high school prospect in the Maritimes and Maine.

This writer asked Coach Yarr what he thought the Tigers could do in '70.

Barry: The last three years haven't been as good to Dalhousie basketball as one would wish it to be. What are you doing to prevent the disappointment of the last three years?

Yarr: It is a gross oversimplification to say that Dalhousie has blown the last three years. It must be noted that Dalhousie has never been predicted to win the MIBC. The best material has not been here always.

Two years ago, when the Tigers had a 9-0 record, they lost their last three games and were called "chokes". Nobody seemed to notice the fact that the three losses were on the road and against the three top teams, St. F.X., Acadia and SMU. On top of this were injuries to Cassidy and Peters.

Last year, I just didn't do the coaching job. We had the material about eight good ballplayers, but I didn't put it together right. Our attitude, both mine and that of the team, was poor and we just couldn't get "psyched up" after the first loss to Acadia.

This year, I started right away in September, working on conditioning, fundamentals, and was more careful about team selection. I want to eliminate the

type of player with a losing attitude, which we had a few of last year. The type of player who is conditioned, well versed in fundamental and has a winning attitude, will breed the desired results.

Barry: How does this team compare to that of other years?

Yarr: This is probably the best team I have ever coached. That is not to say that there is more talent here than even before.

In fact, two years ago I had more talent than now, but as a result of the co-operative attitude of this year's team, I would say this could well be our best year. This team was ready faster, as was illustrated by our performance at Acadia, victories at the Potato Classic and at SMU, which has helped us compile a 9-0 record thus far.

Barry: It has been said that a basketball team can reach its peak too early in the season and then run out of steam. Could you conceive of this happening to the Tigers?

Yarr: I don't believe in peaks, but rather in plateaus.

It is commonly known that a team can sometimes play better at one time than at another, but a winning ball club must function as a unit and should improve as time passes, and as they play together more often. It is true that an extremely heavy schedule can take the edge off good play, but this is only temporary.

No, I really am not afraid of this happening to the Tigers?

Barry: Just what type of asset is assistant coach, Eric Dumford? How do you use his experience?

Yarr: Eric was the most coachable basketball player I ever had. He knows how I think and we get because he and I work out problems through discussion. Eric is a hard worker and a great man for detail.

I would credit Eric with the early maturity of quarterback, Steve Bezanson. Through hours of working together, Steve and Eric have greatly aided in the finer points of our offence. Eric was my quarterback and he has combined the best of himself and Steve in creating his replacement.

Barry: Who would you consider team leader?

Yarr: Brian Peters is team captain and we try to eliminate the negative factors in the ball club through communications between captain and coach. He acts as spokesman for the players and thus far, I am pleased with his ability to act as mediator.

Barry: What do you think of bench strength?

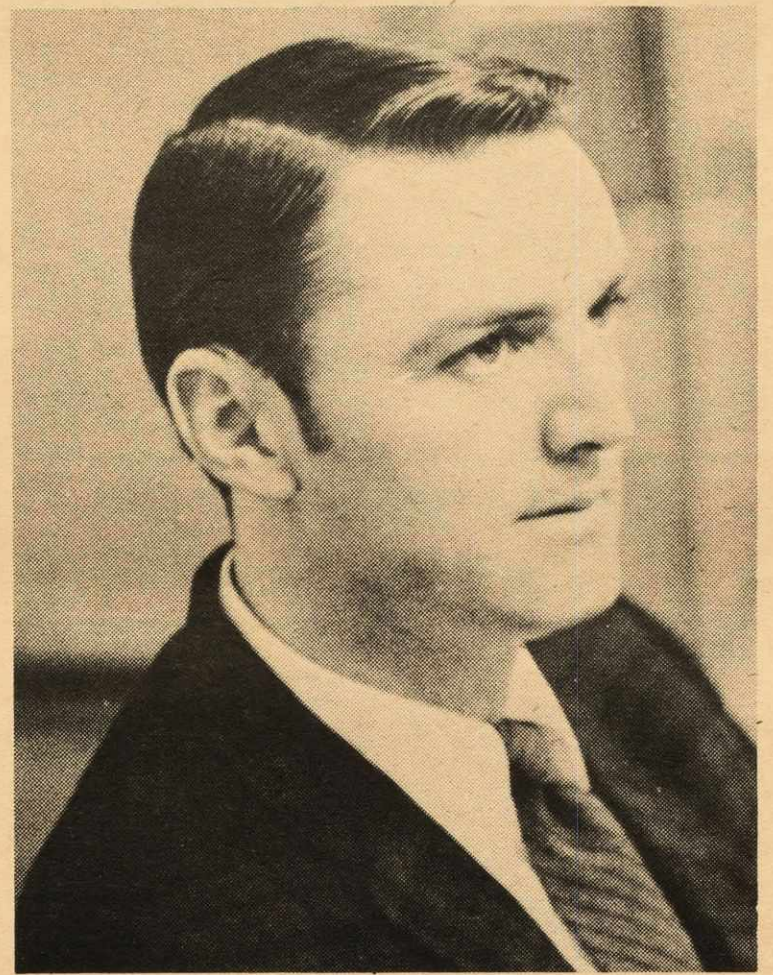
Yarr: I am extremely pleased with the performance of both Mike Flinn and Brock Savage. These players are definitely a positive factor. I am searching for one more strong man to come off the bench and win games for us.

A championship club must have eight good steady ballplayers with experience, ability and court sense. I am sure that they prove themselves. They are all coming fast.

We need fellows like Savage who came off the bench at Ricker (The Potato Classic) and won the tournament for us.

Barry: What will be your biggest tests?

Yarr: Our biggest games will probably be against Acadia on the 28th of January and then our two games with SMU in February. Though every game is a "must" in our short schedule, these will be the most difficult to win and will be a big step toward the conference championship if we can win these.



## Tigers drop Mt. A. 5-3

by John MacBain

Something's wrong you say, when the Dal Tigers manage only a 5-3 win over the mediocre Mt. Allison Mounties.

That assumption is not altogether true, however, as observers at the game can testify.

The Mounties came out aggressively but it was still rather obvious that the Tigers were the better team.

For the Tigers, Chapman and McCullough again played steady hockey on defence. Both made some extremely good moves in clearing the puck from their own goal mouth and McCullough rushed brilliantly at times.

Ken MacDonald hustled all game and Donnie MacPherson's backchecking helped out a great deal.

Ron Naud played fine aggressive hockey, and as always, was like a stone pillar in front of the other team's net. His perseverance earned him a goal and two assists.

**OFFENSIVE STAR** — Ron Naud, who set up two pretty goals and got one himself.

**DEFENSIVE STAR** — Greg McCullough who rushed well all night and was the star of a defense that did little wrong in the third period.

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