

PROFILE

More brain than brawn

BY EUGENIA BAYADA

"Through high school I played both hockey and basketball and then in grade ten I actually quit hockey and concentrated on basketball."

This is an odd revelation coming from a fourth-year blue-liner, even if it is 6'4" Jeff Letourneau.

The 23-year old Ottawa native started skating when he was two years old and has played hockey since he was five but is quick to note, "It wasn't always hockey. In the winter it was basketball and hockey. In the summer it was baseball, a little bit of soccer and whatever else I could play."

Letourneau admits that Canadian university teams were not his first choice; he was aiming for a scholarship to US colleges such as Colgate and Dartmouth. However, when things didn't work out, Letourneau turned to the Tigers who had been courting him for a while.

"I knew a lot of the players who had played here in the past, like Mike Griffith, Mark Myles and Pat McGarry," he explains. "Also, one of Darrell's scouts is a good friend of my dad's."

Assistant coach Kim Houston remembers when Letourneau first came to Dal.

"Here he was, 6'4", his skating wasn't too bad and he had a pretty good set of hands. We thought we could work with him and improve him — get him to the point where he could be an everyday player for us."

"It took basically into his third year [before] Jeff really came into his own," Houston continues. "He was playing very well until he broke his wrist last year. That was unfortunate because, up to that point, he was probably our best defenceman."

A strong work ethic is one of Letourneau's main characteristics and both coaches and players recognize that.

"I remember early last year when Darrell (head coach Darrell Young) told him 'I'm putting you on a series of one-game try-outs,'"

recalls Houston laughing. "That's when he really picked up his game and started to apply himself. I think he had all the skills — he just had to use his size to his advantage."

"I don't think Jeff is ever going to be a mean, malicious person, even on the ice," Houston quickly adds, "but he just had to start using his size more effectively, especially in front of the net and along the wall. Once he realized that he could do that — and do that fairly easily — I think it made the game a lot more fun for him. It also got him a lot more ice-time..."

It was late in the season before Letourneau started to use his size offensively. AUHC goalkeepers could confirm that, once he puts his body behind a shot, it's got quite a bit of momentum.

"Over the four years, he developed into a frontline player for us," concludes Houston. "We were pleased with the way he developed and he'll be missed, that's for sure."

Now, Letourneau is looking forward to graduating with a degree in mathematics. He hasn't entirely ruled out the possibility of returning to play out his final year of eligibility, yet he's the first to admit that the chances are slim.

"I couldn't see myself playing in any other university. Right now I kind of want to get on with the rest of my life — finish school and hopefully get a job somewhere — and the longer I put that off, the older I get, the harder it is to finish school. The only reason I'd come back next year would be to take engineering at TUNS or to upgrade to get an MBA."

Letourneau says that, "down the road," he'd like to coach.

"I'd like to be involved with the younger guys right off the bat because I've learnt a lot myself; I think that I could really help younger players," he says. "There's certain areas that I wish a coach had told me to work on."

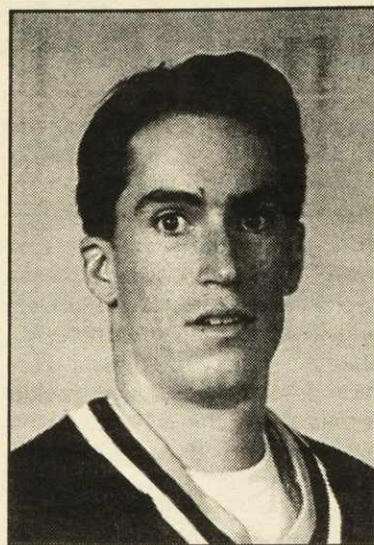
Dal has lost to Acadia in the Kelly Division final for the four years Letourneau has been with

the team. He admits that it's frustrating but not for the obvious reasons.

"Looking back now, the teams in my first two years were so talented," he says. "During the first two, there was a psychological block — we didn't think that we could beat Acadia in the playoffs. The last two years we haven't had as much talent but we've given everything we had and we've come pretty close. It's kind of frustrating to know that, if the teams in my first two years had played with as much heart as we did in the last two years, then we would've beaten them — that's the only frustrating thing."

Letourneau's response to the question of whether he somehow feels "justified" by Acadia's loss to UNB in the AUHC finals is, as ever, diplomatic.

"You always want the team that beats you to go on because then you can say that you got beaten by the best," he answers. As an afterthought, he adds, laughing, "But it actually felt good that they lost be-



cause they'd beaten us four years in a row and they're pretty cocky — they're not afraid to tell us if they've beaten us.

"Last year after they beat us, I remember seeing Dawson (Axeman winger Mike Dawson) standing up on the boards, swinging a golf club and that's just no class."

I know he's not really like that but for some reason when they put that Acadia jersey on, it seems that they all go crazy and it was nice for them to lose," he concludes good-naturedly.

Howe nets \$1200

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Howe Hall's 3rd annual IWK Charity Cup helped raise over \$1000 dollars for the IWK Children's hospital last Saturday night. More than 400 people were on hand to watch Howe Hall Alumni beat the Howe Hall All-Stars 8-3.

Despite the score, the game wasn't as one-sided as it looks.

"Our goalie was fantastic," said Alumni coach Trent Dicken. "They played a lot better than the score suggested."

This is the first year the Cup is being played as Howe Hall versus Alumni, and Dicken, a former active resident of Howe, said he was happy to be selected as the team's first coach. He chose his team from former Howe Hall RAs and council members dat-

ing as far back as 1988.

"[Howe] was our home. I wanted it to be former guys who actually gave a damn about the place," said Dicken. "We had guys drive in from New Brunswick for it."

Howe Hall has long been known as a rowdy place, and Dicken is hoping that events like the Charity Cup will help the residence clean up its image in the surrounding community.

Tickets were sold for \$2 each, and there was also a smoker preceding the game and a 50/50 draw at the arena, bringing the total money raised close to \$1200. This is a big improvement over last year's game, which was held on a Friday afternoon and, according to coordinator Derek West, not as well organized.

Silver

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16-14, 11-15, 15-4, 12-15, and 15-10. Saskatchewan, ranked third in the country coming into the competition, had a dismal tournament, finishing in seventh place over winless Wilfred Laurier University.

In the women's championships, the top-ranked University of Alberta Pandas won their third straight national title with a hard fought 3-2 win over the UBC Thunderbirds.

Dalhousie placed two athletes on the tournament all-star team. Martin, a first team All-Canadian, and Villeneuve, a second team All-Canadian, were recognized along with Alberta's Hatatla and Siebien. Steve Cann of the Calgary Dinosaurs and Ian Taylor from Winnipeg rounded out the all-star roster.

Peter Exall received the R.W. Pugh award for sportsmanship and ability. The 20-year old Dal setter didn't even know the award existed until he heard his name being called.

"I was totally surprised and very honoured," said the second year transfer from Calgary. "I think overall this award is a reflection of the whole team and not just me."

The strong showing at Nationals capped off another successful season for the Dalhousie volleyball program. In addition to an undefeated season and their seventeenth AUAA crown in eighteen years, the Tigers took home their first out-of-province tournament win with a gold at the Waterloo Warriors Classic. They also captured two silvers, at Sherbrooke and at the highly-rated Dal Classic in January.

Dalhousie will field a strong team for next year, despite the departure of key players Villeneuve and Jamie Mallon, who both played out their eligibility this season.

Dal's exceptional crop of younger players will be looking toward veterans Martin and Trepanier for leadership. With the success of the 1997 season, the Tigers are looking to make a return trip to Calgary where the national championships will be held for the third consecutive year.

The tournament was an invaluable experience for the Tigers as team member David Cox acknowledges, "Eric [Villeneuve], Terry [Martin] and John [Hobin] have been great role models for young guys like myself."

The first year commerce student continues, "Alberta lost last year in the finals against Manitoba and their experience from that certainly came into play. Hopefully our team can learn from this year's experience and use it to our advantage."

Villeneuve concludes, "It was a total team effort from the start of the season, and we saved our best games for the most crucial time of year." He adds, "I am very proud to be a part of this team."

Congratulations to the Dalhousie team on the silver medal and all the accomplishments during the season, representing Dalhousie tradition with competitiveness, skill and class. With longtime head coach Al Scott and his outstanding staff, look for the Tiger tradition of excellence to continue for many years to come.

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