

sports

Joe survives b-ball weekend - just barely

by Joe O'Connor

Friday March 18th, 1:30 pm; eyes heavy, rawhide tongue, feeling fittingly green and contemplating St. Patricide. I stride downtown cursing the Blamey Stone, incoherently chanting, *just breathe, just breathe.*

A quick stop at Harvey's soothes the troubled intestines and clears the head. CIAU Final Eight, let us see what you have to offer. I enter the Metro Centre via the security entrance and flash my credentials to the peacefully snoring guard. Eager to take my appointed place courtside I wander the bowels of the stadium and happen upon the media centre...ummm...free donuts, and what's this, a press conference. Feeling suddenly self-important I take a seat and listen as opposing coaches praise one another and their efforts; it is a good thing I only woke up

an hour ago. A few attentive nods, an affirmative grunt, and thankfully it's over. Time for some hoops.

I find my seat beside Imran, my counterpart from SMU. He talks shop, and suffering from a mild case of anoxia I find myself very agreeable (for convenience's sake). Meanwhile, the Caper photographer to my left, obviously proud of his Irish heritage, lies face down mumbling something about caffeine making him crazy. Ah, the tip off.

Brandon versus Concordia. The Stingers of Concordia lead this dance throughout the first half. With the mad logic of loyalty I pull hard for the underdogs from Manitoba and I am rewarded with an 18-0 run to open the second half.

Brandon never looks back, adieu Concordia. Which brings me to my first all-star selection for the tournament: Keith Vassel of Brandon, a 6'3"

guard with legs that could double for a pair of springs.

Dinner, then back for a classic game that pits SMU against Alberta. Sitting beside a pint-sized Herb Tarleck from Port Huron radio who encourages me to relight the drinking lantern, I witness a thriller.

There were waves, monstrous rejections, and halfcourt threepoint connections. Njoku and Sullivan willed the Huskies into overtime only to be vanquished by a couple of Golden Bears named Greg "I can't miss a threepointer" Devries and Greg "you'd think I was too small to play university basketball" Badger.

The final: Alberta 79, SMU 75. Add the two Gregs and Will Njoku to the all-starteam. Along the way UCCB fell to Winnipeg, effectively extinguishing any hope for a Maritime national champ (although UCCB did

win the consolation final). This fact almost killed my enthusiasm for the tournament were it not for my friends from Brandon.

Saturday March 19th, 7 pm; with McMaster waiting in the wings Alberta and Brandon square-off to decide the second CIAU finalist.

Yawn.

A sloppy game of turnovers that attracts few cheers and probably deserves less. My friends from Manitoba fall to an Alberta team which wins on the stellar effort of Greg "you would think I am too small to carry this team on my shoulders" Badger. The final, U of A 79, Brandon 75.

Sunday March 20th, 5 pm, basketball out I choose the TSN option and take in the final from the prone position. The big bodies from McMaster cannot buy a basket, and the final becomes a game of lost oppor-

tunity. Alberta builds and keeps the lead using a host of bench players, and as is often the case in this sport the team with the depth wins. Alberta 73-McMaster 66. Add Shawn Francis and Clayton Pottinger to the all-star team (yes I know that makes six).

Well Dalhousie, Alberta is the CIAU basketball champion. However, champions come and go in life, and we as individuals are left alone to learn and live by life's lessons. This year, working for the Gazette has taught me to always tip my cap to people wearing purple, to share my toys, and most of all: to support my school's athletic programs. After all, school is just school without them.

If anyone would like to put in a public service announcement concerning summer sports or organizational meetings for next year please leave your message with Frank. 494-2507

Dal student chosen for rugby tour

by Carmen Tam

Nova Scotia's J.D. Wheeler is the lone Maritime representative selected to represent Canada in a rugby tour in England. The squad is a developmental team that is a part of the Canadian Rugby Union's build up to the 1995 World Cup in South America in June. As a Dartmouth native, Wheeler is also the first Nova Scotian to make Canada's "A" team, a squad dominated by athletes from British Columbia and Ontario.

Canada has made steady progress in the rugby scene in the past few years. The World Cup team reached the quarter-finals in 1991 and defeated the once-mighty Wales 26-24 last

November in a game that signalled Canada's rise to the international picture.

Wheeler started playing rugby in his senior year at Prince Andrew High School. His high school coach, Mike Cavanagh noticed early his talents.

"He was fast then and very competitive," said Cavanagh.

For the past seven years Cavanagh and Wheeler have played together in various tournaments and have coached together as well.

This will not be Wheeler's first trip overseas. He played extensively in Ireland and England in the late 1980s. In 1988 he participated in a three week tour in Ireland for the Nova Scotia provincial under-21 team, where he

scored two of the three tries in the tournament.

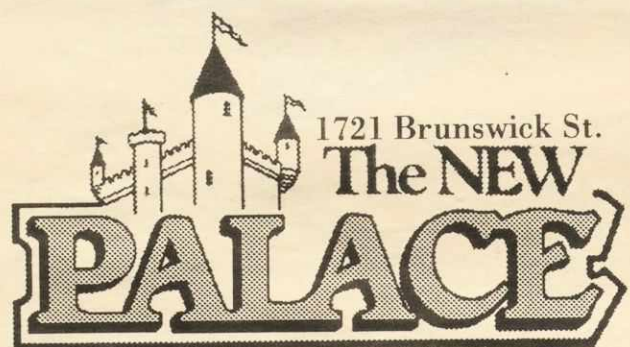
The following year he played in all the games for Highfield Club in Cork, Ireland and won the Munster Senior League, a landmark accomplishment. There were 5,000 fans on hand to witness Highfield's first title win in a conference that boasted twelve competitive teams. Wheeler has travelled across the country, playing in every provincial senior game since 1987.

Last year Wheeler played in both games in Canadian Tier II Championships held in Newfoundland. The championships are one of the rare occasions that the national coaches can watch players from the Atlantic region. Wheeler played well in both

games which helped to gain him a spot on the tour.

Currently Wheeler is finishing his Commerce degree at Dalhousie while also working part time for the Nova Scotia Rugby Football Union as a development co-ordinator.

In the two years that he's held the job he says rugby has increased in popularity, especially women's teams. He adds he would like to see more facilities for rugby and increase the exposure of the sport in the province.



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