

sports

Win in men's soccer a psycho experience

by Angel Figueroa

What a personality.

Defeating Acadia 3-0 in charismatic style last Sunday, the Dalhousie men's soccer team gave itself a much-needed boost in its psychological profile (Jung would agree). Indeed, after a disappointing draw and a baffling loss in the first two games of the regular season, there was only one remedy for the serious identity crisis that had taken shape in the defending AUAA champions — a win, and a big one at that.

And a big, beautiful win it was.

That Acadia got the short end of this pick-up session underlines the importance of the victory in the collective psyche of the team (writer and fan-club included, of course), as it was Acadia that gave Dal that baffling 1-0 loss only seven days before. Team captain Adrian Ibbetson, whose hard day at the office gave him player-of-the-game honours, explains:

"It was hunger. We had a really long time to think about the loss in Acadia last weekend; now was our chance to redeem ourselves. We hadn't played all week, just practised, so we were very eager to play again. In simple terms, we knew we needed a win."

It showed. With brand new smart-looking jerseys, a vaguely healthy pitch (better than other years, at least), and a great show of spectators for what was Dal's first home game, all the variables for a special win were there. But coupled with a creative, fighting spirit that was evident from the opening whistle, it seemed a given fact that victory was on its way. All that was needed were some fine goals to keep the writer entertained.

The first came in the 66th minute of play, after a scoreless but exciting first half made Dal's 14 shots on net seem, in retrospect, like a fitting overture for the opening goal. It was like watching "Soccer Saturday": there was

a quick, high corner kick, and after a brief blur of action in front of the net, the ball was suddenly in the back of the goal, with the keeper lying beaten and motionless on the ground. The slow replay shows how, after the kick by Geoff Axell, and a scramble of soaring players, Ibbetson rises out of nowhere to grimacingly head the ball into the net, just inside the post. Good one, mate.

Breaking the spell of Jeff Farquhar, Acadia's netminder whose shutout carried the upset win over Dal in the previous game, it was also the goal that broke Acadia's back. Shortly after Ibbetson's marker, defender Jamie Sawler put in the insurance goal with a header of his own. Sawler had originally set up the play, after stripping the ball at midfield and then passing it down the right wing before zipping into the six-yard box. Battling in the air with Farquhar, he won the cross from Colin March by heading it out of Farquhar's hands. It was a tough-minded goal scored on a smart-minded play, one that truly highlighted the dynamic talents of this psychological experience.

Other outstanding plays came from a host of other players. Forward Colin Audain put on a special show of talent, with a number of quick moves that drew much admiration from the crowd. Also in the spotlight was rookie striker Colin March, who was sensational, and star midfielder Tony Pignatiello, who added some Italian savoir-faire. Second-year halfback Hieu Quack had a great game as usual, and sweeper Chris Devlin was right in the thick of things as well, adding a psycho-mental flair to the team's personality.

It was Devlin who took care of the nail in the coffin with a one-timer in the 70th minute of play, after a rebound from Axell who had shot from 35 yards out. Devlin had put in a great game, and only deserved a goal for his show of talents, but the little (big) brat



DAL PHOTO: ANGEL FIGUEROA

Rookie striker Colin March was instrumental in the win over Acadia.

is certain proof that AUAA soccer is definitely not suited for family entertainment. (Can we change this?).

Not to be outclassed, Acadia fought hard to get a point on the board with an offensive onslaught in the dying moments of the game. Keeper Trevor Chisolm took care of the threat however, with spectacular acrobatics in the 83rd and 88th minutes of play. Responding in style to the enigma of Farquhar, Chisolm did well to earn his first shutout of the year.

It was Dal's first win of the season, but more importantly, it was Dal's first real game, having come out of its shell and having played like a bonafide team. Coach Ian Kent was modest with the all-too important victory.

"We needed the win; we got it. I said to the guys before the game, 'its time to get to work,' and they got to work. They worked really hard all week and it showed in the way we played. They definitely were hungry; they really wanted a victory."

"Ibbo led the team in the back, while Devlin had a great game in central midfield. He's in a very important role; he knows that and is starting to understand that more, so we'll be looking for more of the same from him. He has to play like that game in and game out if we're to be successful."

"One concern is fitness — it is not where it will be in a couple weeks. Otherwise, things are looking good, but we still have a lot of work to do for the future."

For the players, it was the present that was most important, as all were smiles during the post-game celebrations. Yet it was big man Ibbetson with the cheesiest smile of all:

"I'm glad to get the man-of-the-match honours, but we've all got to play well and put in a team performance if we're to win. My goal just started the ball rolling."

"It was nil-nil at halftime but we were quite confident that we were playing well and that the goal would come. It's nice now that we have [a win] because it takes away the stigma of not having a victory under our belts."

"We were really key to play," he added, "but the test will be this week if we can keep it going for four games in seven days. It certainly takes a bit of the pressure off but we can't take anything for granted, because we're going to have to work hard in the next couple of days."

Of all the players however, it takes a starting rookie to put it best:

"We needed to win really bad," stated Colin March. "All the guys on the team were really hungry for it. Suffering the loss at Acadia was really hard. We've got a very good squad, and people expect us to do well, so a loss at the beginning of the season is not very good at all."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

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