

Water Polo team places fourth at Challenge Cup

The Dal Water Polo team recently matched last year's fourth place finish in the University Challenge Cup, held at McMaster University in Hamilton. Dalhousie was impressive throughout the tournament, coming so close to a sure gold or silver medal, and yet so far.

The squad of eleven composed of Colin Bryson, Sandy MacDonald, Brian Lane, Peter Hastings, Mike Tighe, Albert Hennen, Dave Simpson, Chris McKee, Phil McAuley and Bob Abraham entered the tournament full of optimism and eagerness after ten weeks of training. They won their first three games in a lopsided fashion, outclassing their opposition. The Tigers then lost the next two games, finishing the qualifying round second behind McMaster.

Dalhousie's play was characterized by a resilient defense and a quick scoring punch. Goaltender Colin Bryson had another good tournament and Sandy MacDonald was once again Dalhousie's offensive standout. Coach Clark designed several offenses especially patterned to beat McMaster. But Dal lost to

'Mac' in a gruelling battle in the last game of their qualifying round. The game was a very brutal affair, in which the team that was actually caught and penalized the least, won.

The four seeded teams; Dalhousie, McMaster, Simon Fraser and Carleton, entered the medal round, and Dal squared off against Simon Fraser, a fast swimming team. The Tigers entering the final quarter down 3-1, pulled out all the stops. With two seconds remaining in the game, Peter Hastings scored the tying goal at the height of a supreme team effort. The game entered two overtime periods in which the Tigers were outlasted 6-4.

On to the bronze medal game in which Dal again faced McMaster, their arch-rival. The team vowed to return some of the home team's brutal hospitality of the previous match. The Tigers accomplished this—they were not intimidated at all—but after their supreme effort only hours earlier, they were still exhausted and could not mount any powerful offence. They lost the game 8-4.

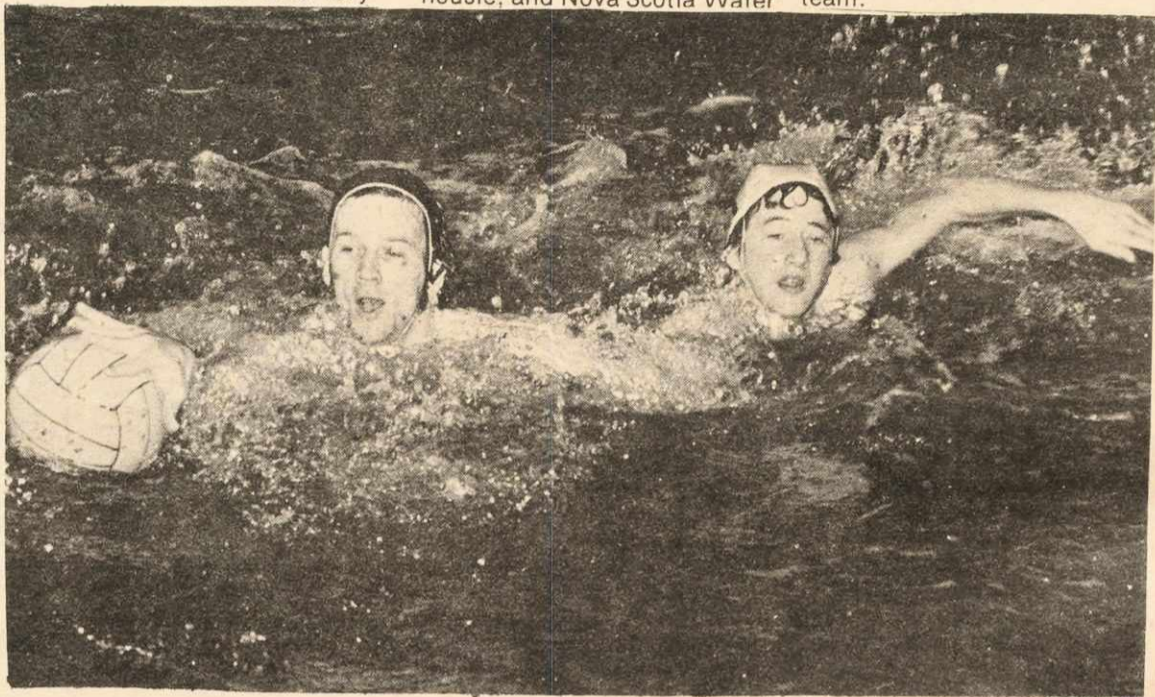
From so close to gold, down

to fourth—the team is disappointed and yet is looking forward to its own Dal Invitational Tournament in February for revenge. For everyone wishing to view the sport, the Dal tourney offers the excitement of Water Polo at a very

high calibre of play.

The Dal Tigers would like to thank the long and hard efforts of their coach, Ken Clark. Ken is leaving coaching and this will create a void in Water polo. Ken has brought Dalhousie, and Nova Scotia Water

polo in general, from its meager beginnings to a national power. Dalhousie will try to continue Ken's improvement process and capture that elusive gold, SOON. Thanks again Coach from the team.



Verbal Diarrhea

Forgive me John, but I don't like your NHL

by Greg Dennis

The problems of the National Hockey League—and in particular, the general spectator apathy it generates—have been discussed and expounded upon regularly for the past few years. Journalists, fans, and players alike have realized the need for some kind of boost to Canada's national game and to this effect, theory upon theories have been suggested.

Televised hockey commands the audience appeal of championship fencing and at the arenas fans are staying away in hordes. If only the league's owners and particularly its pushover president, John Ziegler, would heed some appropriate advice.

Basically, there are two obvious changes the boys in New York should consider.

First off—and strides, or rather baby steps, have been taken in this direction—the violence and senseless fighting has to be curbed. The sport took a beating in the 70's when goon hockey à la Broad Street Bullies was all the rage in shinney circles. For a time, the majority of fans loved to see a game highlighted by vicious toe-toe slugouts or, even better, a bench clearing free-for-all; the hell with the score. I don't know, maybe high unemployment, soaring inflation, and dwindling energy resources had something to do with that kind of attitude. Unfortunately, the playing style of the Philadelphia Flyers, who left behind a trail of blood and bruises as they pushed their way to successive Stanley

Cup wins, only served to reinforce this type of hockey. Other teams tried to copy the Flyers' technique and players at all playing levels tried to emulate cult heroes, like Dave "The Hammer" Schultz. Finally though, and fortunately, attitudes changed. People don't want to see their Guy Lafleurs, Wayne Gretskys, or Anders Hedbergs beat upon by some simple, stick-wielding maniac who belongs in hockey like a prostitute belongs in a convent. The fans—the real fans—bored of the endless tugging of sweaters and post-riot sorting of littered gloves. The big joke in the mid-seventies, of course, was the 'I went to the fights last night and a hockey game broke out' line. The joke wasn't funny. The joke was the NHL.

Demand now is a return, or perhaps a switch, to the purer aspects of hockey—like skating, passing, and execution—as employed by old world and Olympic hockey teams. Ziegler, however, does not appear able to meet this demand head on.

He instead offers token changes in hopes of appeasing the critics. The third-man-in rule and this year's new rule giving a misconduct to any player(s) remaining in the vicinity of an ongoing fight are positive moves. But they fall short of solving the problem.

Solution: An automatic game misconduct to anyone getting in a fight. For a second offense, that player would receive a game suspension in addition to the expulsion; then two games

for the third infraction; and so on. Some conservatives may deem this measure severe, but if the Russians can play—and can they play—without fighting, why can't we?

The second major problem with the NHL involves its structure and scheduling. The lack of undivided fan attention is assisted by poor league alignment, the absence of intense rivalries, and the insipid playoff arrangement which currently leaves 18 of the 21 teams eligible for post-season play, thereby making the regular season merely academic.

Keeping the same conference and division names, here is a possible alignment which looks awfully good on paper. Note the great regional rivalries.

Instead of having each team playing everyone else four times and only three teams being eliminated from the playoffs, the scheduling could go like this: In the Campbell Conference, each team would play six games—three at home, three on the road—against fellow Campbellers and twice against each team in the Wales Conference. Total—80 games.

Each Wales team would also play six games against members of their own conference and two versus each Campbell team. To total 80 games, the remaining four games would be played within the individual Norris and Adams divisions, at the home of the team which had more points the year before. In the Adams Division, for example,

if the previous year's standings finished as printed above, Buffalo would play home games against Detroit, Montreal, Quebec, and Toronto. Conversely, for their last place finish, the Maple Leafs would play four games the following year on the road. The encouragement of additional home games and gate receipts would encourage teams to play hard up to the last games of the year. Having only inter-divisional play in the last month of the season would develop good races to the finish.

Eight teams would make the playoffs, the top two from each division. Within each conference, the second place teams would play at the homes of the first place teams in the quarter finals. The semi-finals would declare two conference champions who would square off in the Stanley Cup finals. Home ice advantage would be decided by regular season point totals.

The divisional alignments as suggested may seem at first glance unbalanced yet, before last weekend's play, 8 of the NHL's top 12 teams this year are from the would-be Campbell Conference. So, shape it up, John, or ship out. Our national game is at stake.

Do you think he reads the Gazette?

CAMPBELL CONFERENCE

Patrick Division

Calgary
Colorado
Edmonton
Los Angeles
Vancouver
Winnipeg

Smythe Division

Chicago
Minnesota
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
St. Louis

WALES CONFERENCE

Adams Division

Buffalo
Detroit
Montreal
Quebec
Toronto

Norris Division

Boston
Hartford
Islanders
Rangers
Washington

