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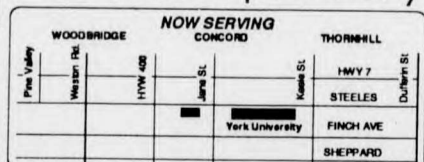
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Underfunding squeeze hits athletics

analysis
by Riccardo Sala

“York is trying so hard to be excellent academically, in arts and in sports, in every way and if we had enough money we wouldn't have to make tradeoffs,” said Provost Elizabeth Hopkins on the issue of athletic funding.

Excalibur recently spoke to Hopkins and to Mike Dinning, director of athletics. The plight of the wrestling Yeomen, national champions confined to practice in a squash court at Tait Mackenzie, brought home the glaring deficiency of athletic funding and facilities at York. Coach John Park, who had taken the Yeomen to the nationals, left the squad to pursue more secure work, angered at the state of the school's sports programme.

The inadequacy of Tait Mackenzie was a focus for the discussions. Sports that do not depend upon the use of the indoor facility, such as soccer, football, rugby and others, are largely exempt from Tait's deficiencies. But for indoor sports like wrestling, volleyball, basketball and others, there is no alternative but to practice there.

Tait has to be divided between academics (physical education), recreation and athletics, said Hopkins. In order for the wrestlers to get the squash court, the recreational users of the space had to be moved out. “We had a petition from the people who used the squash court,” complaining about their eviction, Hopkins added.

“There certainly are plans for an extension to Tait Mackenzie,” Hopkins said, “but these plans have been there a very long time. The proposed facility would be part of a next round of construction.”

“The facility would cost around \$30 million,” Dinning said. “It won't have a pool because that would double the cost, it would have a wrestling room and gym-

nastics room as well as a main gym larger than Tait's. There will be classroom and lab space.

“This facility would go a long way to addressing issues. But it would take at least two years to build it and we don't even have permission yet,” Dinning added.

York has asked the provincial government for matching grants to build the facility, Hopkins explained. “It's anyone's guess if the government will or will not provide the funding.”

“We have an inadequate budget and inadequate facilities,” Dinning admitted. Hopkins pointed the finger at the provincial government, both the present Liberal and former Tories, and their well-documented history of university underfunding.

“This has led to the point where sacrifices have to be made in order that the main focus of York education can be maintained. That means that athletics suffer.”

Some older schools such as UofT can circumvent this underfunding through generous alumni contributions, especially to sports. York is not old enough to have that large a field of alumni, and hence, contributions, Hopkins explained.

Hopkins is lukewarm to the athletics programme. “I think that if you have a given amount of money for recreation and athletics, there has to be a balance for money and facilities. I get the impression that recreation has been getting the short end of the stick for a long time,” she said.

Recreation is understood as a philosophy promoting healthy living rather than the pursuit of Varsity sports for “glory.” Hopkins asks, “Why should athletes get priority of the facilities over recreational user students who have paid the ancillary fees (\$2.85 per credit, almost \$90 for a full-time student)?”

“It's like fine arts, we give all the support we can give them, but we can't afford to give extraordinary

support to one brilliant concert pianist,” Hopkins said. “I don't believe the university can afford to give special support to individuals who are pursuing their own individual talent, whether it be athletic, musical or theatrical.”

Hopkins feels that recreation as a field has only begun to be exploited for its worth. She also believes that the balance should be tipped away from athletics towards recreation to make up for previous “imbalances.”

“The department of physical education, recreation and athletics (PERA) has to shift more towards recreation and make sure that women are getting a fair break in all areas. These are two things I'm trying to do,” said Hopkins. Equity in varsity sports is one area that interests her.

There has to be an equal number of female sports to male. In 1988 past provost Tom Meininger drafted an equity document for PERA. “The agreement aims for something like a 50-50 split for men and women,” said Hopkins. “There are problems in reaching this goal but it's getting better every year. You just have to keep pushing it so it ends up fair.”

Dinning has been receptive on many counts to the suggestions of the provost, both to the equity document and to the belief that recreation and athletics has to express better the recreational needs of the York community.

“Dinning is inheriting a situation he has not created,” said Park describing Dinning and his task as director of athletics. Like Hopkins, who must make do with the money she doesn't have, Dinning is faced with a department suffering from chronic underfunding.

Clearly something has to be done, both for the recreational students and the varsity students. To waste time would be to risk a collapse of an athletic programme which has brought nothing but credit to the university. They deserve better.

Yeoy's back

by Jacob Katsman



Yeoy lives!!! The mascot for York Athletics, which was presumed borrowed or stolen last week, was found Wednesday morning in a corner of Tait McKenzie athletics building.

Apparently, the \$2,000 costume was borrowed for Halloween and graciously returned, said York's coordinator of athletic events Rob Martellacci.

Equipment supervisor Tom Hodgson was the one who disco-

vered Yeoy's return.

“Yeoy was in a hockey bag, all body parts intact,” said Hodgson. “He was dropped off by unknown persons, and there was no ransom note or anything of such type.”

Hodgson said that Yeoy is now under lock and key for safe keeping.

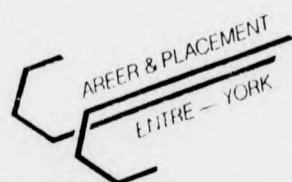
Both Martellacci and Hodgson expressed relief for the mascot's safe return and offered thanks to his captors for bringing Yeoy back home.

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