

Dropping the gloves: a case for fighting in the CIAU

BY GREG WHITE

Every week during the first intermission of CBC's Molson Hockey Night in Canada, millions of viewers across the country tune in to *Coach's Corner*. Don Cherry is a self-professed handsome man and the only thing louder than his clothes is his voice. Cherry is a home-grown, opinionated redneck with entirely too much to say, but people love him because of his colorful commentary, his lust for the game, and because he tells it like it is.

The reality of CIAU hockey goes against everything that Grapes stands for.

For years the CIAU has stood behind the harsh penalties for fighting in university hockey. This year sees no changes in reprimanding those players who drop the gloves. Earlier this season, nine players and one coach accumulated 59 games in suspensions as a result of a bench-clearing brawl between the UPEI Panthers and the Acadia Axemen. In a separate incident, Dalhousie forward Jody Shelley received a two game suspension for fighting St. FX stalwart Maurice Meagher. Minutes later, Dal blueliner Shane Gibbs received three games for instigating.

In the Acadia-UPEI melee, four players received suspensions of nine games or more. In a 28-game season, it all seems a little excessive. This season's suspensions should serve as an indicator that something needs to be changed in the CIAU.

In the National Hockey League, a player receives a 5-minute major for fighting and a game misconduct for instigating. If a player accumulates three major penalties in one game then they also receive a game misconduct. There are incidents where a player will get multiple game suspensions during particularly ugly incidents and rightfully so.

Similar regulations with regard to fighting exist in the CHL and throughout the junior ranks where most of today's university players learn the game. A player becomes accustomed to playing the game one way and is then asked to abandon that style of play in favour of CIAU rules. The end result is frustration, illegal and dangerous stickwork, and a proliferation of chippy and pesky play.

Popular opinion suggests that fighting does not belong in hockey, not at any level. There seems to be an understanding that those competing at the university level should be able to control their temper and hold their emotion in check. Apparently there is a link between higher education and sportsmanship.

In trying to present a balanced argument for the prohibition of fighting

in university hockey I find myself looking into an empty net.

Meeting, but so far that just hasn't happened". The illegal and dangerous stickwork is far more hazardous to a player's well-being than two guys in a fight.

Aside from the practical importance of fighting, it should

be mentioned that it sells tickets. People pay to see Tie Domi play and fans came out in droves to see former Moosehead heavyweight Jody Shelley. Cost-conscious administrators fail to see the relationship between potential ticket revenue and decreased financial contribution to a program.

The great hockey players today are

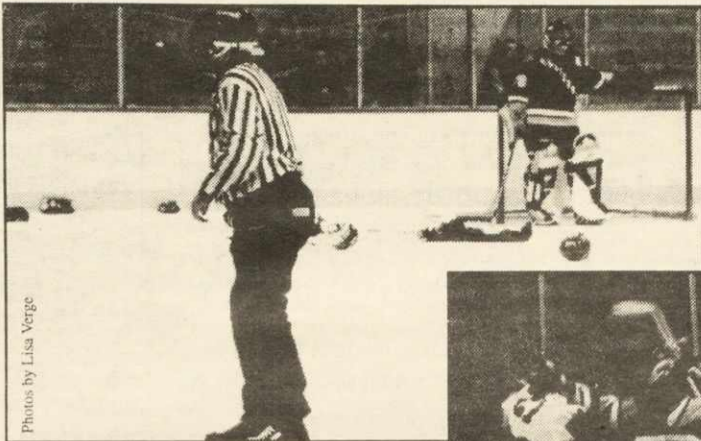
the ones who can do it all. Eric Lindros, Brendan Shanahan, Ed Jovanovski and Mark Messier are the ones that younger players are encouraged to emulate. These are the

prototypical players of tomorrow. It is the rough and physical play that makes these grinders excel. It is not that they do fight that makes us respect them, it is the fact that they will.

Fighting belongs in hockey and the CIAU is no exception. The game is still played with the same emotion, the same grit, and the same physical play that has made hockey so popular around the world. So why change the rules?

Anti-fighting activists suggest that it takes away from the beauty and grace of the game detracting from the skillful and elegant players. Listen, if you really want to see beauty and grace on ice, then the Nutcracker opens at the Metro Centre next month.

Otherwise, this is hockey, it's the Canadian way, and that's the bottom line.



Photos by Lisa Verge



Fighting is a part of the game of hockey. It has been since the game began and it is at all levels, excluding the CIAU. Clearly there are instances that occur that make even the most avid proponents of fighting cringe. Last year's infamous Maritime Jr. 'A' game, where a player was punched after being knocked unconscious, serves as an example of the extreme.

Nonetheless, fighting is even a valuable part of the game. A team can not afford to leave their stars unprotected. Gretzky had McSorley, Bure has Odjick, Yzerman had Probert, and Lindros has himself. The point is that without some threat of reprisal, a team's offensive weapons are targeted by bigger and stronger players. The idea that a player can run an opposing goalie and skate away unmolested is foreign even in Finland, but the CIAU has handcuffed its university athletes.

Having a physical, intimidating team alone can win hockey games. The Broad Street Bullies in Philly, the Big, Bad Bruins of Grapes' era, and the Flyers and the Legion of Doom today, dominate and intimidate teams to swing the pendulum of momentum to their side from time to time.

If you talk to anyone related to the game of hockey, they will consistently tell you one thing: when you take the fighting out of the game, you increase the amount of stickwork. Watching any game in this league, you have to notice the stick infractions. The intended effect of strict suspensions is to eliminate fighting from the game. If a player retaliates in the AUAA, it is with the stick rather than the hands. Spearing, high-sticking and slashing are the undesired effects of eliminating fighting from the game. A player knows that they will receive at the very least a one game suspension if they drop the gloves so they choose to stick their opponent and get the game for two minutes. The CIAU desperately needs to rethink their policy on fighting before something happens that really draws attention to the problem.

AUHC commissioner Dave MacLean says that, in order to affect change, "It would take a lot of coaches talking to their Athletic Directors who would bring [those recommendations] to the Annual

Volleyball brings home the hardware from Sherbrooke

BY CARMEN TAM

A gold medal victory over host Sherbrooke University at the Vert et Or Omnium Tournament last weekend gave the Dalhousie Tigers their second ever out-of-province tournament title. The 1997 CIAU silver medalist swept the favourites Sherbrooke, who were undefeated in round robin action; 3-0 with game scores of 15-13, 15-8 and 15-11.

Top performances came from middle blocker Terry Martin who was named tournament MVP for 20 kills and 7 blocks, fourth-year veteran Jason Trepanier with 23 kills and 5 blocks, and captain John Hobin who totalled 15 kills and 6 blocks in the win. Trepanier and rookie Chris Wolfenden were also named to the All-Star team.

Dal's victory avenged an earlier loss to the Vert et Or just the night before. The Winnipeg Wesmen downed the Laval Rouge et Or 3-0 for bronze.

"Everyone picked up their game for the final," noted Trepanier. "I think we were more ready for a battle than they were," added Wolfenden.

Dal entered the finals after finishing 2-2 in round robin action. The Tigers opened their weekend on Friday with a 3-1 win over Laval University. Martin had 24 kills, 5 digs and 3 blocks to lead the Tigers to a 15-4, 13-15, 15-9 and 15-5 victory. Trepanier and Hobin added 14 and 11 kills, respectively.

The Tigers lost a tough 3-1 match to the nationally top-ranked Wesmen in their next contest by game scores of 15-7, 15-17, 10-15 and 8-15. Martin amassed 27 kills and 5 blocks while Trepanier chipped in 11

kills and 4 digs in the loss. Wolfenden and Hobin had 9 kills each.

The Tigers also split their Saturday matches with a 3-0 sweep over the Waterloo Warriors (15-10, 15-5 and 15-6) before losing a two-and-a-half hour marathon to Sherbrooke 6-15, 15-6, 6-15 and 9-15. Setter Peter

3-2 in the Guelph Tournament final. Bronze went to the Queen's Golden Gaels.

"The first game went very well but we were still trying to find our stride," said Wolfenden. "For the final, we were playing as a team out there and not as individuals."

"It was a huge moral victory going to Christmas break. It was

a nice win over Sherbrooke and creates lots of confidence."

"We played well, we had a solid tournament," added Exall. "It was important for us as it is the last [tournament] for the term. We can feed off it going to the new year. We are very competitive and we are getting better each time out."

The Dalhousie Tigers have asserted

themselves as contenders for the CIAU crown. No doubt this team will be a force to be reckoned with as they are a step closer towards their ultimate goal — the national championships.

Ranked sixth nationally before the competition, Dalhousie ends a successful first term with a pair of matches against the UNB Varsity Reds in their first regular season home games on December 4th and 5th. The Tigers had one of their best season starts as they swept the Calgary Dinosaurs 3-0 in the Mizuno Challenge, captured a bronze at the Waterloo Classic, in addition to their most recent win in Quebec.

The core of the Varsity Reds has returned to the line-up from last season and had a good showing at the Guelph Tournament. Dalhousie, who was undefeated in league play last season, currently sports a 2-0 conference record.

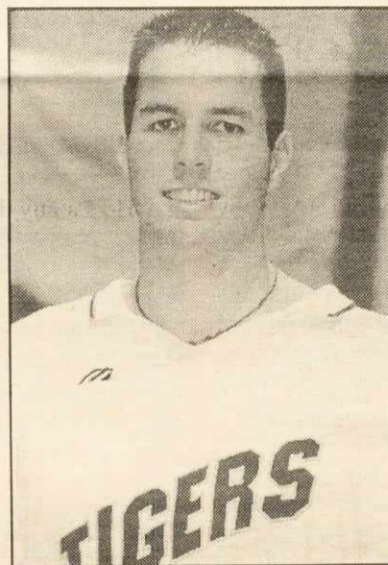
Exall set up Martin for most of his 22 kills and 6 blocks against the Vert et Or while Trepanier and Hobin added 19 and 12 kills.

"Having a strong showing in a long match, we realized we can play against [Sherbrooke]," commented Exall as his team proved during the final, where they only needed ninety minutes to drop fifth-ranked Sherbrooke.

Head coach Al Scott made minor changes daily, fine-tuning for Sunday's final "where everything clicked". Scott was pleased with his team's performance.

"In the final we spread the offense which worked to our advantage," Scott said. "Peter [Exall] was the architect of the game plan. Jason Trepanier had a wonderful tournament, as with Chris [Wolfenden] who was consistent on defense. I also think Matt Hartlen had his best tournament ever."

In other tournament action, seventh-ranked York University topped the University of Toronto



Jason Trepanier



Peter Exall

The Friends of Dalhousie Hockey Society will hold its annual auction to raise money in support of the varsity hockey program. The evening will give you a chance to bid on some great items. There will also be a 50/50 draw, a raffle table, and the opportunity to meet some members of the Dalhousie varsity team. The event takes place this evening (Thursday, November 27) at 7pm at The Red Fox (Bayers Road Shopping Centre). Tickets cost \$10 and price includes 10 chicken wings and two beverages.