

# Climber preps for Everest

by Kristan McLeod

Barry Blanchard's favourite pre-occupation is pulling himself to the tops of the tallest mountains he can find. He plans to scale the tallest, Mount Everest, by the end of November, 1988.

The U of A Arts student has climbed in the French Alps, Californian Sierras, Mexican volcanoes, Asian Himalayas and the Canadian and American Rockies. He has made several first ascents in the Rockies and was part of a three man team who scaled the 25,500 foot Rakaposhi peak in the Pakistani Karakoram.

His impressive credits also include his participation in the 1986 Canadian Everest Light Expedition which allowed Sharon Wood to become the first North American woman to reach Everest's summit.

Blanchard and climbing mate, Albi Sole, climbed to 27,000 feet, supporting Wood and Dwayne Congdon when they reached the 29,028 foot summit on May 23, 1986. Blanchard and Sole were prepared to attempt the summit as well, but the expedition leader, Jim Elzinga, deemed it unsafe because no one was able to support them. The 13-member group had been climbing steadily for over two months, had lost an average of thirty pounds each, and was simply exhausted.

Blanchard describes the letdown as "the most disappointing experience of my life." So he's going back.

When asked why he has such a passion for a sport so simple in

nature, he says, "We've found the environment brings out the best in us... people do the very best they can... it's so black and white."

Although he hopes to someday finish the degree he started in 1977, his principal ambition is to reach Everest's summit. He applied for



permission to climb Everest in 1986 and is awaiting final approval for his 1988 plans (the next available time to climb would be 1991).

He plans an expedition of a different style than that of Everest Light, one he views as a "lighter, bolder, faster style." Instead of spending 65 days building a series of support camps along the mountain,

as he did in 1986, he wants to train on lower peaks for 2-3 weeks and attempt the summit after a week of rest. He also plans to use only 160 feet of rope to leaping up the mountain instead of the 20,000 feet of rope used on Everest Light.

The climbers of the group will be Blanchard, Sole, Kevin Doyle, and Ward Robinson. They will be accompanied by 10-12 trekkers who will support them financially as well as physically. Blanchard has an \$80,000 budget to raise, and will do so in a variety of ways. He hopes to enlist some business men to come along as trekkers, and hopes for a corporate sponsor to act in a similar way the Continental Bank of Canada did for the 1986 expedition.

As part of his fund-raising, he is promoting a slide show given by Jim Bridwell, a pioneer of mountain climbing in North America. Bridwell appeared in the Yosemite Valley 25 years ago and has since established some of the most difficult routes on mountains such as El Capitan and Half Dome. He was the first to climb El Capitan in a single day and is most recognized for his record breaking climb of Cerro Torre in Patagonia. He ascended this peak in two days; 52 days less than the only previous attempt. Bridwell is a front-runner in mountain climbing, and his shared experiences should prove to be interesting and exciting.

The show is being held in the auditorium of the Provincial Museum on Thursday, December 10, at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are available in advance at Fresh Air Experience, 8537 - 109 St., or at the door.

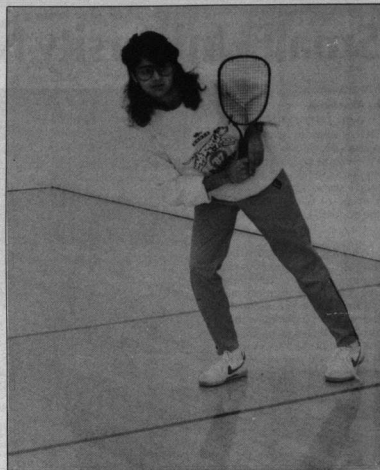


Photo: Dennis Doherty

Business student Razina Visram bested 27 men in the Intramural Racquetball tourney.

## Woman defeats the men

by Carol Kassian

A woman winning Men's Intramural Racquetball? This may have been exceptional, but so was the play of Razina Visram, who was the best player on the court.

Razina was the only female out of 27 participants in the Men's Intramural Racquetball Tournament held Nov. 27 - 29. Her composure and tactful style of play led her to defeat the three top players of the tournament, in consecutive matches, on the final day of play.

"It was quite tiring and the competition was tough. There were quite a few good players involved," said Razina, a first year Business student.

Introduced to racquetball five years ago, Razina has continued to refine her skills, usually playing




three to four times per week.

Men's intramural activities on campus are open to anyone who would like to participate and Razina became enticed by the prospect of a challenging tournament. Playing against men was not new to her; however, as she has participated in many tournaments involving both female and male participants.

Razina's obvious enjoyment of racquetball, combined with her participatory experience, has contributed to the development of her skills. Having won the Junior Nationals at age 16, she is well on her way in pursuing her ambition to progress as far as she can in racquetball. The possibility of someday participating in international competition may be realized by Razina in the not too distant future.

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