

The York Gymnuisance

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A York student shares one gymnasium with 26 varsity teams and over 40,000 other students. Recreational time in the Tait McKenzie gym, located on the campuses north-west side, is so limited that many outside of an organized league can't find the time to use it.

The Tait schedule is something like this: Physical education and aerobic classes in the morning, varsity team practices in the afternoon and intramural games between 8 PM and midnight.

The gym is open to students for limited time blocks throughout the week, but don't expect many options from which to choose.

The main gymnasium downstairs is available for one hour on Friday afternoons (between 1:30 and 2:30) for pick-up basketball. It usually attracts 40 to 50 people. House rules are simple: winner plays on. If your team loses you might as well go home. Losers don't usually get a second chance to play within the one-hour slot. To make matters worse, the gym is often booked for tournaments or special events.

What the hell is a Yeoman?

by Harry Rudolfs

The York Yeomen football team is not really as bad as its 29 game losing streak would indicate. Often, the score



York Yeomen mascot at the annual Red and blue bowl. photo by Michele Boesener

is pretty close. They hardly ever get blown out — last week's game against UofT is an exception, I admit.

Sometimes they put together a few first downs and some good plays. Often they intercept passes and look like they're ready to turn the game around. One of their quarterbacks, Parry Apostolopoulos, is a good passer, and when he gets a few seconds behind a crumbling offensive line, he can launch a pretty good bullet to a downfield receiver.

What then, is wrong with the hapless Yeomen? Well, first of all, it's just possible that York is not a football school. Perhaps it's because we're too arts-oriented. Arts and Humanities students just don't make great gridiron warriors. At least I haven't seen anybody going to class wearing a construction helmet. We are very good in a lot of other sports, though. Hockey, basketball, gymnastics, track, field hockey and soccer, to name a few.

Secondly, might it be heresy to suggest that since York has the most varied cultural community of any university in Canada, and that since football is primarily a North American sport, there doesn't exist the same focus on football as there does on more ethnically homogenous campuses?

Thirdly, the team has been in the basement so long that a kind of

"Every Friday they try and kick us out [of the gym] early," says Roger Jackson, a fourth-year computer science student. "I remember when we used to play basketball from one to four. Every year the time slot dwindles, and now we have an hour and they won't let us play for the full hour."

Aside from Tait main gym, students can access a smaller gym on the second floor. Half the gym is filled with gymnastic equipment while the other half

is usually available for open recreation. But the small gym is just that — a small gym. It won't comfortably accommodate more than eight people playing a basketball game.

York students pay \$4.15 per credit (\$124.50 for a full-time student with 30 credits) on top of tuition to help pay the athletics and recreational budget. So what can those fee-payers getting squeezed out of the gym do about it? Not much.

"There is not much you can do," says one student who tries to use the gym regularly and asked not to be

identified. "I understand that the gym is very busy and the varsity teams need it, but I wish there was some time available for us (the student). I figure I pay my school fees and I am entitled to use the gym just as much as anybody else."

Although access to the gym is very limited, some might consider joining an intramural team. The Student Intramural Recreation Council organizes the recreational league. SIRC coordinates about 24 different sports. Just don't expect any answers.

"The time we are allotted is not enough. With the growth of our programs we could use more gym time, but we have to work with what we have," Karen Zwierschke, an employee of SIRC, said last week.

League games are scheduled between 8 PM and midnight and tend to appeal to students living on campus.

"How can they expect me to play intramurals when the games are played so late? I live in Mississauga and have classes at 9:30 in the morn-

ing," says Wells Salvem, a political science student.

That leaves an athletics and recreational program geared towards varsity teams and residence students. It also means a majority of fee-paying students are being left out of the program.

SIRC officials argue that York doesn't have the facilities to allow their program to encourage more commuter students to get involved.

"We can only accommodate so many teams. It would be ideal if we had another facility, but I don't see one in the near future," Zwierschke says.

Bain agrees. "A sad thing is the fact that we do not have a new facility where players can practice and where people from this university can go and play whenever they want."

York brochures often showcase the Metropolitan Track and Field Centre — located to the north-east of the Tait gym — as a sports facility for students. Unfortunately, York students don't have access to the centre after 3 PM, when it is only accessible for a fee. If you take night classes you can forget about using the track, unless you want to dish out more money.

"Athletics is not a big part of my life, but sometimes I go to the track centre to work out, the only problem is that you have to leave by three," says student Rolanda Downey.

Budget cuts to the athletics and recreation program have led to some friction between some members of its different departments. One such conflict regards the allocation of funds

between the varsity and intramural teams. Some recreation league supporters insist any further budget cuts cannot fall on the side of their program. Varsity administrators say the budget divides 60 per cent varsity and 40 per cent recreational. SIRC officials say its as high as 85/15.

The varsity teams continue to cut their practices short or share the gym, inhibiting the quality of their practices. The intramural programs are limited in their ability to reach a broader range of students. If they actively recruit commuter students they won't have the facilities to accommodate them.

Depending on who you ask, York's administration seems either unwilling or unable to move on the issue. Capital projects taking priority over a new sports facility include the Science building, Calumet college and the Student Centre.

"The administration understands the importance of athletics in a student's life," Zwierschke says, although she's not aware of how they establish

priorities when allocated funds. In sharp contrast, Bain says "athletics and physical education have not been a priority for them [York administrators]. Let's just say that they don't understand."

But while the sports departments hash it out, as is often the case, the big loser is the student.

One student seemed to be speaking for a lot of people in summing up the frustration: "If I'm paying for it, I better be able to use it."

"If I'm paying for it, I better be able to use it."

underdog mentality develops. Nobody comes to York for the football program and the best players keep going to the powerhouses.

Fourthly, maybe there's something wrong with that surrealistic mascot. What the hell is a Yeoman, anyway? According to Webster's it's either a minor landholder, a member of the servant class, or a royal guard. Other schools get animals like a beaver or a mustang or a dinosaur for symbols. We get this demon with a huge head and pork pie hat waving a plastic axe and representing the servant class. How do you expect us to win any football games?

His name's not even spelled right. If it's "Yeoy", which is the official spelling, then it should be pronounced Yee-oi or Ye-o-ou or something. Why don't they spell it Yeoyo? Then at least he would be a palindrome. Or what's wrong with the phonetically correct, Yowie? The misspelling of the perverse icon only adds to the confusion on the field.

I saw Yeoy — or Yoey, or Yeowy — at the Red and Blue bowl last week and the poor fellow is looking the worse for wear. The fur on his head is starting to separate and his chins and nose are seriously sagging. A few years ago some overzealous UofT fans pulled the mascot into the crowd and pulled his sad little head off. Certainly the years haven't been kind to Youwie.

Perhaps its time to replace him with a symbol that will inspire more confidence. How about a dragon? Or at least a rabbit or a squirrel? Then we could chalk up some points with the pigskin. We could be contenders.

In the meantime the football Yeomen are perched on the verge of a record losing streak. They should easily surpass Waterloo's all time mark of 33 early next year. And the Cheyney University Wolves in Pennsylvania could lose any day now, giving us the current North American Championship. So maybe we shouldn't monkey around with the symbolism.

Perhaps, after we hold all the titles, we should look at the money spent on the football program and see if we couldn't better utilize it on ping pong or ultimate frisbee. We could sure

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