

Tigers clinch first

BY AARON BLEASDALE

The women's basketball team rolled over the Memorial Seahawks twice last weekend, and finished first place in AUAA league action for the third consecutive year.

The team seems a good bet to defend their AUAA title as well. The Tigers are entering the championship tournament on a ten-game winning streak, and the addition of UNB transfer Erin Savage can only help.

Savage has been sitting out all year due to regulations regarding fifth year eligibility — a player can only play her fifth year of eligibility if it's with the team on which she played her fourth. Savage has sat out her requisite year, however, and has recently been promoted from practice player to full-time player.

The veteran is expected to play a major role in the Tigers' offense. Savage played over thirty minutes in both games against the Seahawks and totalled 24 points, 10 assists, and 7 steals. That's pretty good for a player who's being worked into the already tight line-up.

The team should also benefit from the return of Jessica Mace, who has been sidelined with an ankle injury for much of the season.

Saturday night, the Seahawks played what Dal head coach Carolyn Savoy described as a "sagging man to man defense" — which is basically a man to man that plays soft on the perimeter in favor of clogging the inside lanes — but the Tigers gave a more literal definition to the term, beating MUN 82-52.

Savage's game-high five steals helped launch an effective transition attack for the Tigers who shot a terrific 57 per cent from the field, versus Memorial's 38.1 per cent.

On Sunday afternoon, however, the Seahawks came out to play.

In the first half, the Black and Gold looked a little disinterested. They were shooting a more down to Earth 38.1 per cent from the field and went into the half tied at 29.

"Our defense wasn't as sharp in the first half," details Savoy. "They kept it fairly close and Memorial started to think they could play with us so they started to perform quite well."

In the second half, things went more smoothly. The defense tightened up and Dal won 61-52.

Savoy attributes Dal's lackadaisical



DANIELLE BOUDREAU

Carolyn Wares shuts down a Seahawk player. Dal beat Memorial twice last weekend to clinch their third straight AUAA league title

ical play in the first half to their having clinched first place the night before; the desire just wasn't there.

The lock on first place leaves the Tigers as the first seed in this weekend's AUAA tournament. They'll enjoy a first round bye and will play the lowest advancing seed in

their semi-final match.

Despite the ten-game win streak, the addition of Savage, the return of Mace, and the first round bye, Savoy isn't overconfident. It has been a competitive season and in the playoffs, she says, "if someone has the game of their life, it's gonna be hard to stop them."

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Martin said, "We haven't seen them or played them this season. However, I don't think it matters who we meet if we are all playing our top game. We can beat anyone when we are on top of our game."

The Tigers attended an awards banquet on Tuesday night which honored the best in university volleyball. They were joined by the best seven squads in the country, including the top-ranked University of Alberta, Sherbrooke and Manitoba who'll be seeking their

third straight national title. Dalhousie nabbed two spots as Martin was named a first team all-Canadian and Villeneuve captured second team all-Canadian recognition.

CIAU bronze medalists in 1994 and 1995, the Tigers are hoping that with a strong season behind them — which included a first place finish in Waterloo, a silver at Sherbrooke and, more recently, a silver at the Digs Classic — they are more than ready to challenge for the gold. Good luck at Nationals!

Volleyball Nationals run from March 5th to March 7th. Look for coverage in next week's Gazette.

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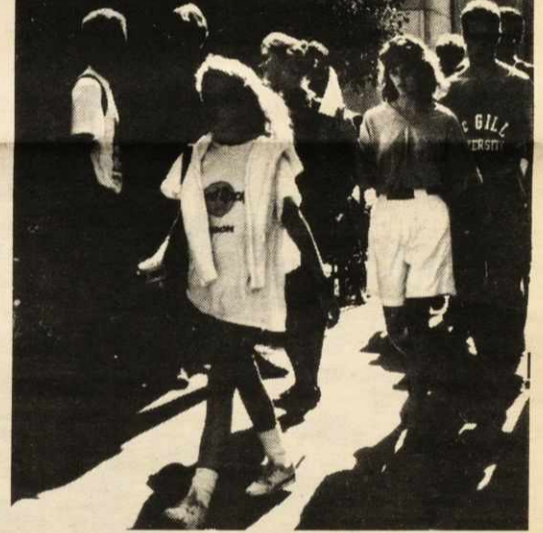
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