

# Pandemonium at the 'Plex

by Kevin Charles Little

The buildup was spectacular. Everything you would want. The rankings revealed Dalhousie number six, and Saint Mary's number one. It was of course the biggest game in the last five years for the men's basketball team.

Winter Carnival provided all that you would want from a night's festivities: booze, live music and basketball. The Grawood provided the liquor, the Moonbuzz blues band provided the live music (and occasional cheer) but the basketball game fell far short of eager Dal supporters' expectations.

Peter "Doc" Ryan told a packed Grawood it would be "Pandemonium at the 'Plex". Dal fans did not need encouragement to attend. The Dalplex was standing room only. The Dal players appeared like a team ready to claim an upset victory. But were they ready?

With every pre-game dunk the crowd went wild. But that is all the Dal fans had to go wild about. It was obvious Dal had not dealt with this kind of frenzy before. They were over anxious, trying too hard. They let the emotion carry them away. In contrast Saint Mary's looked like a team who had been in this situation before. They too were affected by the hype which helped them play like the number one ranking they deserved.

Dal was quickly behind 21-4 and faced an almost impossible task. Dal opened the game up to try to come back. But the more Dal opened up the more SMU exploited Dal's weaknesses. Saint Mary's used their three big men Rob Latter, Ron Blommers and Tom Kappos to dominate under the boards. Not only did they out-muscle Dal, they also were left wide open on several occasions.

Early in the game Doc Ryan replaced the ineffective centre Stan Whetstone with Phil Howlett.

Howlett came off the bench to give Dal fans at least something to cheer about. Needless to say Howlett was Dal's player of the game. The success of Latter, Blommers, and Kappos made the job of talented guard Lee Davis easier.

Dal's most gifted player Steve Lambert fought a losing battle all night. The guard had no-one open under the basket and often was surrounded as Saint Mary's sensed his helplessness. Many times Lambert was forced to shoot from far out, the rebound only to be gobbled up by St. Mary's.

But the star and the clown of the game was Lee Davis. Davis had the skills of a Magic Johnson but the class of a John McEnroe. Whether or not he was provoked by a disappointed and slightly inebriated Dal audience, Davis as an athlete should show more self discipline. There can be no excuse for his behaviour, which included an obscene gesture with one of his fingers. The coach of St. Mary's looked on without a second thought, he never considered replacing Davis, despite his conduct. Larry Nelson, CKDU sports director, pointed out the similarity to the Whitey Herzog and Gary Templeton incident. Nelson expressed his disappointment with the coach's decision not to pull Davis off the court.

But Davis was the Player of the Game. He displayed excellence in dribbling, passing, defence and shooting. And oh can he shoot. Several times Davis left Dal fans with their mouths gaping. He displayed moves which earned our cheers but vulgarity which warranted his removal.

The score was 55-36 at half-time, and any hopes of an upset were pretty well diminished. Midway through the second half with a 19 point lead St. Mary's began to rest their starters and give their

bench a chance to play. As a result the margin was reduced to 8 points as the game ended. Full marks, though, to the Dal team which kept on trying for a comeback. Ryan played his best players, but ultimately fell short 94-86. Dalhousie was really never in the game and St. Mary's looked like the number one team they are.



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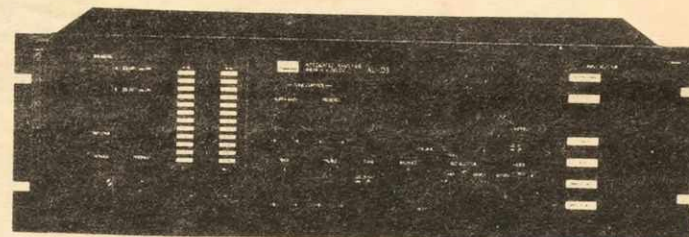
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