Concordia Stings Guelph In CIAU Men's Hoop Final

By Eric Drummie
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The Concordia University Stingers are the CIAU Men's Basketball Champions after easily handling the University of Guelph Gryphons in the finals of the final eight tournament played last weekend in Halifax. The Stingers full court press and tight inside defence proved to be too much for Guelph who had to rely on their outside shooting which only came in at 43% on the day. The game was the only blowout in what proved to be a very exciting tournament with a lot of the games being decided in the last minute.

THE FINALS

Concordia managed to neutralize the forward line of Guelph, as Concordia coach John Dore had his team tighten up in the zone under the basket and put on the full court press. As the 22 point win will attest to, this strategy worked to a T making Guelph shoot from the outside and as they were only shooting 43% the outcome was really never in question after the first 10 minutes of the game.

After the championship game Guelph coach Tim Darling said Concordia should not get the respect which they deserved while Guelph game MVP Tim Mau praised Concordia for being the best well rounded team in the tournament.

Coach Dore emphasized that his team was not expected to do well, since no one from his conference was on the CIAU first team all-stars, would take some of the pressure off of his team in the early games. He admitted playing in front of over 6000 fans going for the opposition didn't make winning any easier. Tournament MVP Nick Arvanitis said that his team did what they had to do in order to defeat the Gryphons and he could not describe the feeling of winning.

CONSOLATION FINAL

In the consolation final a one-man show was put on by Brandon guard Joey Vickery who scored 42 points leading his team to a 96-92 win over St. F-X.

St. F-X was hit hard early in the game when Richard Bella got into foul trouble early in the first half, but despite this St. F-X had a 4 point lead at half time. Brandon came on hard in the second half playing a though pressure defence and combined with Vickery's shooting they managed to take a 9 point lead with 3 minutes left. St. FX got the lead to within 5 with just over 2 minutes left when Bella missed two crucial foul shots. Turnovers late in the game by St. FX never allowed them to challenge again.

After the game, Vickery was glad that it was his team's type of game: high scoring and fast pace. Along with Vickery's 42 points forward Elden Irving also had 19. For St. FX, Richard Bella got 22 with Wade Smith and Marion Mathis both contributing 20.

MVP"S

Tournament MVP's were Kevin Vienot of Acadia, Richard Bella from St. F-X., from the Brandon Bobcats Joey Vickery, Tim Mau of Guelph, and Michael Cohee from the Concordia Stingers.

#1 UPSET

The third game on Friday night pit Acadia against Alberta. Despite upsetting St. FX in the AUAA finals the previous week at the Halifax Form, the Acadia Axemen were only ranked eighth going into the tournament, where the X-men were ranked sixth as a wild card. This ranking indicated they would have to battle #1 Alberta in the final game of the first round. The hopes of a victory for the Axemen were slim for many thought that the Alberta/Acadia game would easily go in #1 Alberta's Favor.

Acadia's Ted Byrne powers his way through Concordia's defence, but... Photo by Eric Drummie

Neither Acadian nor Alberta took control in the first half of the game. They swapped the lead five times with Acadia scoring six straight points at the end of the half to tie the game at 39.

Acadia started strong in the second half building up and maintaining an 8 point lead for most of the half. However, at the three minute mark Alberta took control and scored ten straight unanswered points to tie Acadia and put the game into overtime. Seven of these points were scored by Golden Bear game MVP, Sean Chursinoff.

OVERTIME

Foul trouble caught up to Alberta in the overtime giving Acadia two bonus free-throws, both of which were converted, to give them a 6 point lead for much of the first 5 minutes. Matched with five points in the last minute of the overtime gave Acadia what look to be a good lead. A 3 point shot with 11 seconds left brought the Golden Bears to within 3. Alberta would get two more chances to tie it but neither shot would go through the hoop giving the victory to Acadia.

After the game, Alberta coach Don Horwood praised Acadia as the strongest most physical team they had played all year. Acadia coach Dave Nutbrown returned the compliment and stressed that his team must play better in upcoming games. Game MVP Kevin Vienot emphasized that his team must realize that they have only won one game and must focus on the rest of the tournament.

The game MVP for Acadia was forward Kevin Veinot (22 points, 10 rebounds), despite missing 5 of 7 free-throws.

Strong Showing For Upstart Acadia In Halifax

The Axemen eventually realized that their shot at a national title had disappeared. Photo by Eric Drummie

St. FX UPSET

St. Francis Xavier X-Men could not make it a rematch of the AUAA. championship as they lost to the Concordia Stingers by a score of 78-71. The X-men seemingly broke the game open late in the first half taking a 10 point lead into the locker room.

In the second half, both teams came out playing a very tough physical game. Concordia showed their full court press which was obviously successful as they steadily gained ground on the X-men tying the game with 4 minutes left in regulation time. Even with the crowd of 6800 behind them, as well as two crash test dummies distracting the Concordia foul shooters, the X-men could not get their game together and consequently Concordia was able to walk away with a 7 point margin of victory.

John Dore, coach of Concordia, was surprised by the charges saying that no excessive force was used in the game and flatly denied Mason was on the floor for anything but to play basketball. He also berated Konchaliski for his non-professionalism in his accusations against Concordia.

ACADIA STUNG

Acadia was riding high off of their win over Alberta the previous day, but #4 Concordia Stingers bit soon, bringing the Axemen down to earth early in their Semi-Final match. Turnovers, foal trouble, and a slippery floor worked against Acadia in the first half giving Concordia a 48-32 lead at the half.

COMEBACK

Acadia came out determined in the second half to make it a game. Their tough defence forced six turnovers of which five were converted. Added to an excellent half by Kevin Veinot (15 points) and his teammates Kevin Lee (9 points) and Ted Byrne (8 points), Acadia would chip away to tie the score at 68 on Ted Byrnes jump shot, with 2 minutes left.

By this time 4000 of the 6500 fans were standing and cheering for Acadia. A large group of which were on the floor of the Metro Center beside the Acadia bench. This group made its presence known to the Stingers during free throws by waving banners and their arms back and forth from behind the net. This tactic was very effective in distracting the Concordia's Stingers at the free-throw line. However the Stingers did not let this get them down.

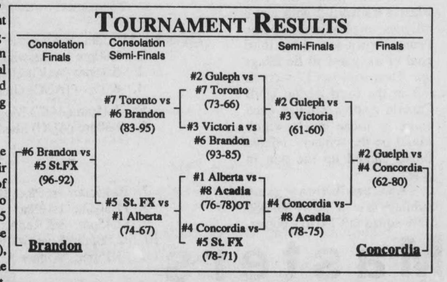
For the first time in the game Acadia took the lead by 2 only to have Stingers guard Michael Baker regain a 1 point lead with a three point shot 20 seconds latter. Concordia scored one from a free-throw and on the ensuing rush Acadia tied the game again at 72 with two points from Danny Steele. By this time though Acadia was coming to the end of their string with Kevin Veinot, and Skeeter Mower fouling out of the game. On Concordia's last rush third year Stinger, Michael Cohee, was fouled. Despite the crowed noise and waving hands Michael quieted the crowed twice with two perfect free-throws giving Concordia a three point lead (78-75) with 12 seconds left. Acadia had a hard time working the ball up the court against a full court press by Concordia. This resulted in Eric James having to make a hasty three point shot, while in stride, to tie the game. Unfortunately for the 6500 fans the shot bounced off of the rim into a Stinger defenders' hands to end the game.

The players of the game were Kevin Veinot for Acadia (30 points and 10 Rebounds) and Nick Arvanitis for Concordia (27 points and 10 Rebounds).

OVERALL

Overall, a very exciting and for the most part a very well run tournament put on by the CIAU and as most of all-stars will be returning to their teams next year it looks promising for continued exciting action from men's basketball in Canada.

Tournament Results



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