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for more info call Bruce at 454-8095.
*All serious cyclists in horrible shape welcome

St. FX rules at CIAU's

by Charlie Cook
Curtis Cox

Halifax is a great basketball town. We know this because the eight teams who compete in the AUAA (the UNB Red Raiders included) could all count on having the city rally behind them come CIAU tournament time. This year St. Francis Xavier carried the hopes of Maritimers and X students and alumni into battle. The X-men came through in the 3-day endurance test and gave us a big lift.

In doing the job, X made history while overcoming it. They have been a perennial contender in the AUAA; on balance the nation's strongest conference these last three decades. But X had acquired the reputation of not living up to their potential and worse, of being a team that folded in a big game.

The focus of this perception had become X coach Steve Konchalski, the Yank who suffers from persistent hoarseness. "His teams play soft in the clutch" or "they adjust way too slow" were common observations reflecting directly on coach K. But not this year. The X-men played a gritty, scrappy tourney, especially defensively, and Konchalski got a shoulder ride around the Metro Center floor.

Four years ago Konchalski recruited three French-speaking lads from Bangui in the Central African Republic: Richard Bella (6-9), Aristide Nguilibet (6-8) and Guy Mbongo (6-6). Bella, being the tallest and strongest, has carried some leadweight expectations on his back since then. His game can't be called polished, and maybe never will, but what he lacked in skill was made up for with heart and hustle. In the final against McMaster, Bella had 17 rebounds, 4 steals, 1 block and 32 points - and deserved his tourney MVP award.

The Final was a treat to watch with Bella squaring off against McMaster's Jack Vanderpol in a battle of good "big men". When the dust cleared at halftime, St.F.X. enjoyed a 38-33 lead. McMaster challenged the lead throughout the second half, but the X-Men's stingy defense kept the Marauders from getting too close, holding them to 38% field goal percentage and giving up only three 3-pointers in 25 attempts. In the end, St.F.X. triumphed 72-64, despite shooting only 48% from the foul line. Bella led all X scorers, while Vanderpol added 19 points and 18 rebounds for the Marauders.

St.F.X. began the tournament with a tight 83-80 upset over Calgary. Guy Mbongo came off the bench to lead the X-Men with 26 points. They went on to defeat Ottawa 64-54 in the semi-finals holding the Gee-Gees to 34% field goal percentage and only 24 points in the second half.

X started their road to the CIAU's by squeaking into the AUAA playoffs with a win over Dalhousie in their last regular season game. They went on to defeat the UCCB Capers 72-69 in the AUAA semi-finals by virtue of a 3-point hail Mary shot from half court at the final buzzer, then rolled over St. Mary's in the final 84-71.

McMaster handled the Brandon Bobcats in the first round, but had to prove themselves in the second round against Concordia. In the closest game of the tournament, McMaster came back from 13 points down in the second half to win by one point on a running one-hander by guard Marc Sontrop with seven seconds left.

McMaster earned a CIAU wild card berth after finishing first in the OUAA West, despite being upset in the conference semi-final 95-85 by Western Ontario.

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