

CHESTER'S CORNER

University sports by Alex Field

UPEI: AUS Soccer Champs

"Panthers here, panthers there, panthers every fucking where!!!" Shouts went up in the locker room of the UPEI men's soccer team after their 2-1 victory over Dalhousie to win the AUS Championship.

It was a thrilling weekend, which began on Saturday as the Panthers played the Saint Mary's Huskies in the semifinals. The game began with some quickness, but as the first half went on the teams got into a battle in the centre third of the field, and both teams had very few chances to score. Starting the second half with a 0-0 tie the team began to push a little harder, and before you knew it, the Panthers were able to break the deadlock, as Brett Norton made a hard pass to Patrick O'Connell, who dummied the ball, which was picked up by Matt Thomson. Once Matty T got the ball inside the 18-yard box, he shot it under the SMU goalie's arm, off the post, and nothing but net! Saint Mary's did their best to get back in the game, but were unable to get anything past UPEI's goalie, Mark Gardiner, who made some of the most amazing saves I've ever seen.

On Sunday, the team not only had to face a tough opponent in the Dalhousie Tigers, but they also had to fight freezing winds, continuous snow, and an icy field. The conditions were more suitable for hockey than soccer, but the two teams took to the field to battle for AUS supremacy. The teams went back and forth in the early going of the game, and chances seemed to be everywhere. The large crowd of fans shook in their blankets, or snowsuits, as they watched both teams run around sliding in the snow, with shorts on.

It was Dal who drew first blood, but before the half was over the Panthers were able to tie up the score when Ryan Anstey scored after a mad scramble in the six-yard box. The sec-

ond half was a hard-fought affair that had no scoring, but a lot of hard tackles and timely defence. So with 90 minutes of soccer played, the game went to overtime; a golden goal for the AUS Championship. You could see the tension on the field, or maybe it was just the snow, but both seemed to magically disappear as Matt Thomson once more found the back of the net, to win the game, and the Championship for the men's soccer team.

In the end no one cared about the cold weather, because WE'RE # 1, and that's all that matters. There were many cheers of celebration in the men's locker room (please refer to the first line of this article for an example), but the biggest cheer was saved for the team's coach, Lewis Page, who has done an amazing job making sure that he and the team are prepared for every game that they play. The men's soccer team has had a lot of success this year, and any player you talk to would agree that they everything to Lewis.

The men's soccer team knows they are not done yet, as their focus begins to shift to the CIS Championships at Carleton University. This team is really hungry for more soccer, and while winning an AUS title was a great accomplishment, this group of athletes doesn't want just be at the CIS Championship, they want to win it. The Panthers will play McGill University on Thursday, and the host team, Carleton on Saturday. The bronze and gold medal games are on Sunday, and if this weekend is a sign for anything, then I would have to say that neither wind, nor snow, nor the opposing team can stop the UPEI men's soccer team from being in that gold medal game. Best of luck guys, and give 'im hell.

