

MacDonald scores winner in OT

Hockey Panthers win first ever AUAA crown

By Ross Hartinger

"I could have kissed him", said Darwin McCutcheon after rookie goaltender Tony Haladuick made a spectacular glove hand save on U de M forward Claude Vilgrain in the third period in UPEI's 2-1 overtime victory at the Forum Saturday.

"After the save we had to win it for him", said McCutcheon. The win gave the second-ranked Panthers a two-game sweep over the third-ranked Universite de Moncton Blue Eagles and their first ever Atlantic Universities Athletic Union hockey title.

With UdeM player Jacques Jobin in the penalty box for holding, Bob MacDonald knocked a loose puck out of the air at 2:24 of sudden-death overtime period after the P's stormed the Moncton goal.

The goal sent the sell-out crowd of 2700 to its feet, and the noise of the crescendo echoed through the Forum like a train rocketing through a mountain tunnel.

The Panthers, which finished in first place in the AUAA regular season defeated Dalhousie University Tigers twice by 4-3 tallies to take the semi-final 2-0, while Moncton, after losing the opener 4-3 to Acadia in Wolfville, defeated the Axemen 4-3 in double overtime in Moncton and ousted them the following day 9-3.

UPEI coach Vince Mulligan, who played defense on the Saint Dunstan University Hockey Saints which won an Atlantic title in 1965, said Saturday's game would be close and UdeM coach, Jacques Noel admitted UPEI had better depth.

"Noel tried to develop a checking line but it was too late ... we have two checking lines and guys like Norman Beck who aren't known for throwing the body around were out there checking", said Assistant coach Mike Ready following the victory outside an emotional UPEI dressing room.

Ready said the Panthers grinded the Blue Eagles down and in the overtime period kept up the same strategy and waited for a break.

The grinders were very evident as Don Clow, Gordie Roche, Danny Revell, Garth Arsenaull, Bob Hicks and Jeff Steffen forechecked strongly in the Blue Eagles zone.

It was a total team effort and was one of the best games played by the Panthers after the Christmas break.

Serge Roy put the Blue Eagles on the scoreboard first as a defensive mistake in the Panther zone allowed the defenceman to pick up a loose puck in the slot and he beat Haladuick at 5:29 of the first period with an accurate shot.

Norman Beck tied the game with only 1:36 left in the period as he pounced on a Rob Moffat rebound and slammed the puck into the right side of the empty Blue Eagle goal.

UdeM goaltender Dave Quigley faced 18 shots in the opening frame and kept UPEI goalscorers at bay for the next two periods, facing 32 more before the game was over. It was Quigley who save face for UdeM in the final period as he stopped Ron Carragher on a couple of breakaways.

UPEI goaltender Haladuick came up with some spectacular saves, also robbing regular season MVP Claude Vilgrain midway through the third which really turned the momentum in favor of the Panthers.

Haladuick faced only 6 shots in the first period and only 23 during the entire game but they were well aimed by the UdeM sharpshooters.

Haladuick played goal in the 5-4 come-from-behind victory last Wednesday and Coach Mulligan kept the rookie netminder in, despite having alternate Dave Reid and Haladuick throughout the year.

The mid-seventies. UPEI were ranked number one in the country after they set a record setting pace of 14 wins and 0 losses.

The Panthers slumped a little and won the conference

Union champions and have claimed the Atlantic title about five times.

The game played Wednesday in Moncton, which UPEI won 5-4 in the final minute, set the tone for the game

shot past a screened Haladuick to tie the game 2-2.

Bob MacDonald scored his second goal of the game at 6:35 to give UPEI a 3-2 lead after two periods.

Randy Muttart won the face-off to the left of Quigley and kicked the puck out to Bob MacDonald who snapped a quick shot from the slot past the UdeM goaltender.

UdeM scored another in the third period at the 7:00 minute mark, and then Francois Sills stole the puck from defenceman Darwin McCutcheon behind the net and wheeled in from of the net to tie the game 4-4.

It looked like overtime was in the cards but the Panthers were inspired in the final moments.

They wanted to win the game for team captain Doug Currie, who was taken to hospital after a massive check by UdeM forward Michel LaForest late in the third period.

Instead of retaliating, the P's regrouped and played outstanding hockey in the final stages of the game.

UPEI's winning goal came with only 25 seconds remaining in the game, as the Panthers swarmed around the net after Quigley stopped a Panther 2 on 1 break.

Randy Muttart scored his second goal of the game after picking up his own rebound and found an open space high into the right hand corner.

Doug Currie did not play in the second game and was replaced by Don Clow who really did a great job.

Currie watched from the sidelines but was involved in post-game ceremonies as his teammates carried him on their shoulders for a victory lap around the ice surface.

Currie is expected to play this weekend as the Panthers head to Ottawa to play the University of Ottawa Gee Gee's, for the Eastern Canadian Hockey championship with the winner advancing to the final tournament in Toronto, Ontario next week.



Panthers Bob Hicks (left), Steve Fulton (kissing trophy), Greg Gravel and Doug Currie (on Gravel's shoulders) celebrate UPEI's 2-1 victory over the UdeM Blue Eagles Saturday to win the AUAA hockey championship. (Photo: Guardian Sports).

The Hockey Panthers finished the season in first place, a historical first as the best finish for a Panther hockey team was second in

championship on the last regular season game in the AUAA against the Mount Allison Mounties.

It has been twenty years since UPEI was on the top of the heap in Atlantic college hockey and Vince Mulligan played defence for the Saints back in 1965. His defensive style prevailed over the explosive UdeM Blue Eagles, which were two-time Canadian Inter-University Athletic

Saturday in Charlottetown.

UPEI came out forechecking right from the initial face-off and opened up a 2-1 first period lead with goals from Bob MacDonald and Randy Muttart. Don Leblanc scored for Moncton.

In the second frame, UdeM tied the score when Serge Roy blasted a point

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