

THIS SPORT **SEASON**

Hopes are high for Panther teams this season. Coaches, UPEI's Sports department and UPEI's president treated the Island's media to a pre-view of the 1999-2000 season. The conference was held at the Field House and hosted by Ron Annear, the head of Marketing and Programs for UPEI Athletics.

First to speak was Barb Mullaly UPEI's Athletic Director. Mullaly had high praises for the support from the media and sponsors and the hard work from the athletes and coaches. Following the Athletic Director came each of UPEI's team coaches with their outlook on this season.

Woman's Soccer

Coach Paul Steel lost 8 players from last year and will be fielding a younger team this year. There are 7 first year players this season and 4 started in the team's opening game. Captains for this season's team are Lana Birch and Sherri Gallant. The Woman Panther's coach said that he is looking toward the future with his team and this year's goal is to make the playoffs.

Field Hockey

This year's team will have 6 rookies with as many as four of them in starting positions. The field hockey team will also have three award winners returning this season. The Field Hockey Panthers will be competing in a three team league (with Dalhousie as a club team).

Men's Soccer

Bruce Norton, will be returning to coach the defending AUAA Men's Soccer champions this year. Coach Norton explained that this season would not be easy with the loss of three players from last year and other teams aiming to defeat last year's champs. Taking over the position of Captain this year will be Brodie McMurrer with John Michael Murphy and John Sutton as Assistant Captains. The Men's Soccer coach also revealed his high expectations for this year's team as he was only "relatively pleased" with their 8-0 season opening win against Moncton.

Men's Basketball

George Morrison returns this season as head coach of the UPEI Men's Basketball team. Morrison notes that it is still early in the year for the team but that he is optimistic with 20 players trying out for this year's team. A change in the league means the Panthers will

be playing St. Marys this year instead of Acadia. Looking ahead to the season coach Morrison noted "Anything short of the playoffs would be disappointing".

Woman's Basketball

Tracy Elsworth, the coach of the UPEI Lady Panthers, has 9 players returning this season and 6 recruits. It is still early for the Woman's basketball team but coach Elsworth stated that it was a "quality team" and that she expected "nothing shy of playoffs". Elsworth went on to explain that she would like to take back the championship that the team held two years ago.

Woman's Volleyball

Speaking on behalf of the Woman's Volleyball coach Jeff MacEachern was Barb Mullaly UPEI's athletic director. Mullaly explained that this year's team is "much improved over the last couple of years". At this point there are 16 players trying out with 3 returning players and 4 rookies.

Hockey

The hockey team's head coach, Doug Currie, will be joined this season by assistant coaches K.J. White and Ron Carragher. Currie explained that they "graduated a large crop of players" last year and will be have 12 new players this season. The new players include 7 forwards, 3 defencemen and 2 goalies. Coach Currie noted that he sees "potential" in this year's team and expects a strong "team atmosphere" to be created.

Concluding the evenings speakers was University of Prince Edward Island's President Wade McLauchlan. President McLauchlan gave his thoughts on the upcoming season and then went on to thank the coaches. The President explained that the coaches are "virtual volunteers" and "do it for the love of the game" because they only receive a small amount of pay compared to the work they do. Finally Mr. McLauchlan praised the community for the support and sponsorship. **END**