



Cheers! To Sports Notes by Steve McManus

From Alexander Keith's. Those who like it, like it a lot.



Panthers Clinch Playoff Birth

A convincing 72-55 victory on Saturday secured the Panthers men's basketball team a trip to the AUS Championships in Halifax on March 12th-14th. With their seventh win in a row, and eighth in the past nine games, UPEI is looking strong heading into the post season as they look to defend their AUS crown.

Just four short weeks ago the panthers were on the outside looking for a playoff spot with a record of 5-7 but now they have finished third in the Nelson division with a record of 12-8 after their late season heroics. At home this season the Panthers have posted a record of 6-5, while owning a road record of 6-3. They have shown they can win at home or away, so the sky is the limit for these men and should not be intimidated by the Halifax Metro Centre for they have come out victorious in all three of their games they have played in Halifax this year.

Currently sitting in last place in the conference in rebounding (32.9 per game), the big front line of Kierstead, Duncan, and

McKinney will need to step up the intensity this weekend. However, the Panthers are able to boast the highest blocks per game in the conference with 3.65 and 73 in twenty regular season games, the highest assists per game with 17.6.

Leading the Panthers into the playoffs is Jeff Walker with 14.3 PPG, Doug McKinney with 7.4 RPG, and Tyler Wood with 4.9 APG. Also, if the Panthers wish to have the success they produced last year, they will have to rely heavily on the explosive play of Sherone Edwards.

Edwards can pose a threat to any defense from any spot on the floor if he is able to bring his "A" game to the show. With the playoffs approaching, the Panthers are looking strong and have a good chance to repeat as Champions as they will face Acadia (6-14) in the first round. The two teams have split their two meetings this season with both teams winning at home, Acadia 82-74 (OT), and UPEI 66-52.

Men's Basketball Drop Final Game of Regular Season

The last thing the Panthers basketball team wanted to do was have their winning streak snapped heading into the playoffs. With a playoff birth already in hand, the Panther faithful packed the field house in hopes of giving encouragement for the red hot Panthers. Unfortunately, UNB came in and silenced the crowd with a stunning 80-62 beating.

The teams traded baskets in the opening half and UPEI went into the locker room trailing by one, 32-33. UPEI looked to come out hot but the second half was much of the same as the two teams shared the lead until the 10:44 mark.

At this time Panther head coach Mike Connolly called a timeout to settle his troops down and ice the hot shooting of the Varsity Reds as they began to pull away 47-43. Following the breather, UNB lit up the

scoreboard by going on a 13-3 run in less than three minutes and drained 7 three pointers in the final ten minutes. With frustration setting in on the Panthers following a multitude of poor calls by the officials, Jeff Walker had seen enough and decided to take it into his own hands.

Having been tripped, and fallen on without a foul given, Walker pounced on a loose ball at the top of the UPEI key, mauling the helpless UNB guard. "He's crazy!!" could be read off the lips of the terrified UNB player from the running track at the Sports Centre. Duncan also got into the mix by throwing a few verbal jabs at the grown up basketball playing Harry Potter representing UNB. Good luck to the boys in the upcoming playoffs and they hope to see as many Islanders as can make it.

Lady Panther Named AUS Rookie Of The Year

Congratulations goes out to Melissa Anne Campbell as she recently received the AUS Rookie of the Year award for her efforts with the Panthers. This native of Montreal had a phenomenal rookie performance for UPEI this year as she averaged 10 points, 3 rebounds and 2.5 steals per game, placing her in second in the entire conference for steals. With Campbell leading the way, the Panthers women's basketball program is looking as solid as ever for the future.

Women Panthers End Season On Strong Note

The UPEI women's basketball team finished up their season this past weekend with a 59-51 victory over the UNB Varsity Reds. With the win, the Panthers finish up their season with a 6-14 record. Certainly not the record the team had hoped for at the beginning of the year, but certainly a productive year nonetheless. Recognition must go out to graduating Panther, Jenna Connolly. Jenna has improved greatly over the past four years and is uncertain as of yet of a possible fifth year return.

