

By Scott MacDonald

Last weekend in Halifax the Panthers dropped a 86-78 decision to the ST. Francis Xavier X-Men at the Forum, closing off the 1994-1995 basketball year.

The sixth seeded Panthers had defeated every other team in the AUAA this year except for the X-Men, losing both previous games that they had played against them by a combined total of eight points. It appeared for the first 30 minutes of the game that the Panthers would reverse their ways against X, carrying a 46-40 half-time lead into the second stanza.

After a hot shooting first half, though, St. FX tightened up their defense, and shut down the Panther's outside attack, in particular the play of guard Dougie Newson.

Newson led the way in the first half as the sophomore stepped up to provide 14 points in the first 20 minutes, on six field goals including a pair from three-point land.

X then threw a stranglehold on the Panthers perimeter attack as X's Chris Clarke tightened up the defense on Newson, allowing him only one field goal in the second half, a trey.

After hitting from downtown seven times in the games early stages, the P's only knocked down two more in the final half. The team went cold during the second half missing both long range jumpers and easy bunnies that they should have made. They were within two points with just over three minutes left, but were forced to foul, and X came up big at the line.

The loss closes off a 9-11 regular season, but this season saw many pleasing surprises after the team had been written off by the Atlantic media at the first of the year. The Panthers had beaten every team in the league this year, splitting with all of the teams in the league (with the exception of X), including a 2-2 record with the AUAA champion UCCB Capers.

After losing players Jason Kielley and Kevin Mitchell, some of the younger players really stepped up their games several notches; the insertion of Newson and Greg Lucas -- two

Panthers fall to X in AUAA's First round exit closes disappointing year

sophomores who saw little time in their rookie years -- into the starting five keyed a late season winning streak.

Newson finished the season as the team's fourth leading scorer (hitting for 12.2 points a night) as he had some big



twenty-plus evenings. He appears to be one of the key players for the next few seasons as he is an excellent instant-offense type player.

Lucas brings in some needed height to a club which overall is on the small side. He has shown tremendous improvement in his second season, and is being counted on to be an inside presence in the next few years.

Curtis Robinson had a breakout season as he was named AUAA MVP, and finished sixth in the country in balloting for All-Canadian, making the second team. Curtis may play pro in England next year, but if he returns the Panthers could have one of the best inside games in the league next year.

The team loses guard Craig Walker to graduation, who easily had his best year in a P's uniform. Craig finally was let loose by coach Morrison and showed what he could do, getting major minutes in his final season. Walker hit 39 threes, finished second on the team in scoring at 14.2 ppg, led the team in assists, and was arguably the team's best defensive player. Walker was a fan favorite for his five years here, and will be a hard player to replace.

Peter Lawlor also graduates but it is expected that this Academic All-Canadian will return to school next year to complete his final year of eligibility. Lawlor was third on the team in scoring at over 12 a game, and could shoot the three with the best of them. Lawlor is a heady player who rarely loses his cool, always keeping his mind on the game.

Even though this was considered a poor recruiting year, the rookies came in and did a credible job. A pleasant surprise was the play of 6'6" David Mullally. Mullally improved by leaps and bounds over the season quickly gaining both confidence and experience, becoming a valuable frontline reserve who often played in crunchtime; coming up big in the home victory over Dalhousie at home late in the year.

With more consistent effort and game to game intensity, the Panthers should be one of the upper echelon teams next season.

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Student Union Elections

Advance Polls March 27 & 28, 6-9pm
Regular Polls March 29 & 30, 9am-5pm
Voting takes place in the Breezeway