

## OFFSIDER

There is something very exciting about the American Hockey League.

When the Civic Centre hosted two American Hockey League games between the St. John's Maple Leafs and the Moncton Hawks--the farm teams of the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Winnipeg Jets--on the fifth and sixth of March, near-capacity crowds packed into the Civic Centre for both games. The weekend proved that hockey is more important to many Islanders than storm-warnings. The fans were impressed with the action in both games; fighting is still a crowd-pleaser in Charlottetown. St. John's, the "home" team for the weekend, won both of the games to the pleasure of the crowd. The baby Leafs are returning to the Civic Centre on the eighteenth of March for a game against Island-favourite Rick Vaive and his Hamilton Canucks, the farm team for the Vancouver Canucks.

I found both of the games to be very exciting and a lot of the excitement came from the players. I have seen live National Hockey League action, and some of the players in that game are well-known to most people who follow hockey. Guys like Brett Hull, Raymond Bourque, Cam Neely, Craig Janney and Adam Oates were on the ice that night. It was a great game; Brett Hull scored a hat trick and broke a goal-scoring record. I could hear Cam Neely yelling at some of the other players.

But the AHL games were equally, if not more, exciting. No real stars play for either team. The Leafs' Yannick Perreault is Toronto's superstar-in-the-making, but he really was not all that impressive in the two games. Kent Manderville played for the Leafs; he helped Canada win a silver medal in the last Olympics. Russ Romaniuk was on the ice for the Hawks; fans saw a lot of Romaniuk on CBC during the playoffs last season. Not very many of the players are well-known to anybody outside of AHL fans or an NHL team fan who takes the time to know the team's prospects or veterans.

So why were the games so exciting? I think part of the excitement comes from knowing that these are the players who will someday cause an impact in the NHL. For example, if Perreault becomes the player the Leafs are hoping he will become, it will be exciting to remember him in

the live games from the Civic Centre. "I saw Perreault play once when he was just a kid." In the case of Russ Romaniuk, he became more of a hockey player in life; seeing him on CBC does not matter anymore. I am not saying that seeing tomorrow's stars is more exciting than seeing today's, but watching tomorrow's stars elicits a feeling that the NHL cannot offer.

The Ottawa Senators' organization has conditionally promised to give Prince Edward Islanders their own AHL farm team. If 3,000 Islanders show their interest in the Senators' farm team ("interest" being defined as a fifty dollar pledge made before the end of March--one-tenth of the cost of a season's ticket), then

the Senators will move their farm team to the Island for next season.

But the Canadian government has already set the precedent for allowing more senators on Prince Edward Island than the number allotted by our population; it was part of the agreement with which the Island entered Confederation. According to this federal precedent, the Senators' organization should concede to putting their farm team on the Island even if the numbers are not high enough; that is, if 3,000 people do not pledge to the season's ticket. Perhaps John Ferguson should be made aware of this fact. ●

## U.P.E.I. sports scene comes to an end

by Todd Petrie

The 1992-93 athletic season came to an end last Saturday as the U.P.E.I. Lady Panthers lost to the University of Toronto 82-58. The A.U.A.A. champions won the right three weeks ago in the A.U.A.A. playoffs, which they hosted, thanks to a thrilling 91-87 win over the St. Fx Lady Xaverians.

The Panthers went to Victoria on a winning streak, but the competition in BC would be provided by some of the top women's basketball teams in the country. Many of this year's Top Eight finalists also participated in last year's CIAU'S, hosted at the Sports Centre, including the Winnipeg Wesmen and the Victoria Vikes. The Victoria squad, last year's winners, went through their second consecutive perfect season, posting a 20-0 record. But, in the Western League finals, the Vikes were upset by Winnipeg and would advance to the Nationals only as the host squad. The lady Panthers, widely assumed to be seeded eighth, breathed a sigh of relief as Victoria was yanked from the

number one position. Since the eight seed would play number one, U.P.E.I. would not play Victoria in the opening round. Nevertheless, Winnipeg received the number one posting, thanks to winning the Western League championship and a 32-1 record, and would face the Panthers in the opening round. The Panthers, huge underdogs heading into the game, played well and kept pace with the Winnipeg team. But, the Wesmens' superior offensive skills outmatched U.P.E.I. and they went on to a decisive 96-80 win. The Panthers, out of contention now for first place, were relegated to the consolation round against the other first round loser, University of Toronto. On Saturday, despite Lori Knickle's 22 points in her final game as a Panther, lost 82-58, and the Panther's highly successful year was over. In a rematch of the western League final, Winnipeg played Victoria. In the final game the Wesmen proved their earlier victory over Victoria was no fluke as

*continued on next page*