

## UPEI Basketball Teams Get Ready for Stretch Drive

As February begins the UPEI men's and Ladies B-ball teams prepare themselves for the stretch run at their respective AUAA titles. Not only is there excitement because of the up coming playoffs but in roughly one week from now the UPEI feildhouse will open and the basketball teams will finally be able to play in a building that is worthy of the talents.

On a sad note with the opening of the field house Alumni Gym which has been home to Panther Teams for the last 40 years will finally close. This gym which has been home to some of the best players in the CIAU will see its last game this Sunday when the UPEI Panthers play host to the Saint Mary's Huskies. This is the last chance for any one who hasn't seen a game in Alumni Gym to do so. After Sunday's game Alumni Gym will no longer be host to the green and white of UPEI.

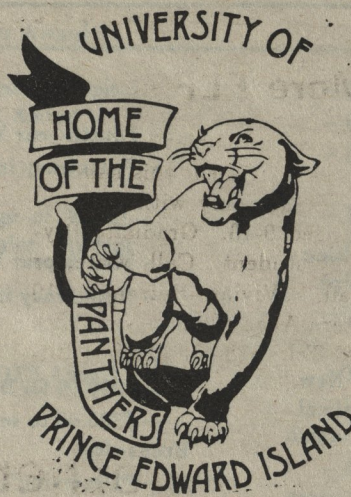
Since this gym has done so much for the teams and the University itself it is time that we as fans do something for it. On Sunday when you go to the game bring a friend, even if they don't like sports, who cares. This last game has to be a Party. We

want the gym to ROCK all game long. Bring any noisemaking device possible. We want to shake the gym like it never has before. Who cares how crazy you act that's what University is for. Other Universities are like that UPEI should be the same. so come on out and support the Panthers and give Alumni Gym a farewell it deserves. Panther fans, Just Do It!!!

The teams themselves have had decent results for the most part of the season. The Panthers after losing 5th year players are going through a little bit of transition but appear to be finally coming together. The Panthers faced their first tough tests of the year in AUAA action when they played acadia and Dalhousie in two games.

It appeared that the easy games the Panthers had the week before didn't prepare them adequately enough for the task at hand as the team performed far below what is capable of playing. The Panthers had trouble getting any offense going and lost by three 62-59.

From there they travelled to Dalhousie where in the past UPEI has always had tough



games. This time proved to be no exception as the Panthers played much better and were tied or just a few points behind for the whole game and were able to force overtime. Unlike last year when the Panthers won in overtime against Dalhousie this year would be different. The Tigers went on an early scoring binge and that would carry them to victory 86-81.

The Panthers received more bad news the following week as it was learned that point/off guard Darrell Lynch would miss the upcoming games against S.M.U. and St.F.X. because of an injury to his knee that kept him out of both the acadia and Dalhousie games. By press tie this week he will have found out if he can play against Saint Mary's when Lynch returns he should undoubtedly give the team a boost.

The team also received more bad news when Thursday rookie point guard George Alford left practice and the team. His status as of right now is unknown.

So without any real experience at the point the team left for two more big games. Saturday night against Saint Mary's the Panthers found themselves down by ten at half and then coach George Morison inserted rookie Lowe Quichard at do point and the provided the necessary spark as the Panthers picked it up from there and Peter Gordon hit for 19 down the stretch to lift the squad in front. When Quickhand came some presure packed free throws at the end of the game it effectively iced the victory. Gordon had 30 points and Quickand 13 to key the Panthers to a 69-64 win.

That set the stage for the Sunday game against the #1 ranked team in the country, The Saint Francis Xavier X-men Fans of both teams had been pointing to this game as a really indicator to as to who had the better team.

The Panthers the 2-time defending AUAA champions and X #1 in the country for a lengthy period with the heralded African connection led by 6'9" African National team member Richard Bella.

As has been the case in recent years the Panthers fell behind early and were forced to play catch up for the rest of the game. The X-men had the real damage done by off guard Wade Smith who hit 7 of 8 trifectors in the first half for 21 points and gave his team a nine point 54-45 lead at half time.

The Panthers played much better in the second half as they held Smith in check and slaudy narrow the lead down. The Panthers were able to get it to one point 62-61 with 13 minutes to go but than Richard bella helped the X-men go on a 88-0 run that effectively put the X-men on top for the rest of the game. UPEI repeatedly mode runs at X but could never again get it that close.

For the Panthers Dennis Smith had a big game as numerous time he went strong inside scoring 20 points in the process and also hauling down 11 rebounds. Trevor Wilock add 18 points and 8 rebounds.

The X-men were led by Wade Smith who scored 30 points.

Currently the Panthers are in 5th place with a 5-3 record, good for 12 points it should be remembered that UPEI games against Nova Scotia teams are forth 4 points. So with a winning streak the Panthers should be able to leap frog up the standings.

UPEI's Peter Gordon is that in the AUAA in scoring averaging 20.6 points a game. Trevor Wilock is 5th in rebounding averaging 8.0 rebounds a game.

The Lady Panthers have also undergone some transition this season as well. For the first time in three years the Lady Panthers lost their own Rodd-UPEI New Years Basketball classic. In the first two games the Lady Panthers were easy winners. They blew out the Branon team by 13. In the final they wee to go up against the Ottawa All bees, a well balanced team that was capable of scoring from many different angles and from different players.

The Lady Panthers expected a tough game as they were without two of their best players. Forward Stephanie Smith left the team at the beak citing personal

reasons and Forward Paula Edwards was also absent as she attended a family function out of Province.

The bee bee's came to on five an quickly opened up a lea of eight points. The Lady Panthers called time out and tried to slow things down. The succeeded in halting the momentum of Ottawa for a short time but couldn't close the gap. At half time the bee bees were up by 10 points.

The second half started the same way the fist one did as the bee bees again opened up the lea to 15 points. A feeling began to become appearent in the gym as the fans realized that for the first time in 4 years the Lady Panthers were in range of losing in Alumni Gym. With that the fans began to get into the game an the Lady Panthers state a own.

They applied full court presure an trapped the bee bees all over the floor. For a time it appeared that they might pull it out. The lead shrank to 7 but the Lady Panthers wouldn't get it any closer. At first the bee bees wee rattled by the crowd an the press but then they regained their composure and were able to hit some key shots down the stretch that effectively put an end to the UPEI charge. The final margin of victory for the Ottawa bee bees was 14 points.

Tournament MVP was Janet Swors of the bee bees. The Lady Panthers ha two all-stars Center Lori Knickle an guard Susan Kinckle. other all-stars came from Brandon, Ottawa and Saint Mary's.

From there the Lady Panthers hit the road for two important games against Dalhousie an Saint Mary's. Despite all the changes the Lady Panthers underwent and the five new players on the team they still had an excellent chance to finish fist in their division.

UPEI played an excellent game against Dalhousie but just came up short losing 68-67. Dawn 68-61 with just under a minute left Kathy Quin nailed two thee point bombs to get within one an ha possession of the ball with just seconds left. As Quin started upcourt she was hit an the ball awarded to al, despite an arguement by UPEI. al then just ha to tie up the ball an wait out the clock.

The Lady panthers had little time however to think about that

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