



Tournament M.V.P. Lori Knickle tries to obtain the leather ball from another human being.

Panthers power way to A.U.A.A. title

The University of Prince Edward Island Lady Panthers will make their second consecutive appearance in the National Women's Basketball Tournament thanks to an impressive come-from-behind victory over the St. FX Lady Xaverians last Sunday at the U.P.E.I. Sports Centre. The win capped off one of the most successful seasons ever for the Lady Panthers as they claimed their fourth A.U.A.A. title.

The Panthers' road to the championship started as it ended- against the St. FX team at the U.P.E.I. Sports Centre. The Panthers played well at the first of the year, winning four of their first six games, but rival U.N.B. Red Bloomers got off to an even better start and had a solid hold on first place. The turning point of the

season probably came in Moncton, New Brunswick, the neutral site where the entire league met for a mid-season tournament. The Panthers won the tournament with a perfect 3-0 record including wins against St. FX and first place U.N.B. Red Bloomers. The wins lifted the Panthers' record to 7-2 and thrust them into contention for first place.

The following weekend, however, the Panthers' first place hopes were dimmed after a loss to the Red Bloomers. But, on the weekend of January 13th, the Panthers went on one of their most crucial road trips of the year. On Saturday the 13th, the Panthers beat the Dalhousie Tigers and travelled the next day to Antigonish to meet the strong St. FX team. The Panthers were virtually guaranteed a playoff spot but they had

to win both games to keep their first place hopes alive as U.N.B. was winning also. The Panthers squeaked out a tough 92-91 win on the Lady Xaverians' home turf, thereby opening the door to first place. The Panthers, erasing the memory of their loss to U.N.B. a week earlier, put themselves back into first place contention as they reeled off seven straight games. The loss against U.N.B. would turn out to be the last loss of the year for the Panthers in A.U.A.A. competition.

The Panthers returned home to the Sports Centre to close out the regular season schedule at home against the St. Mary's Huskies and the Acadia Axettes. By this time, U.N.B. had already finished their schedule and were awaiting the results of U.P.E.I.'s games to see who would finish first and subsequently earn the right to host the playoffs. The Red Bloomers finished with an impressive 14-3 record and were sitting atop the league standings; however, two wins for the Panthers would also give them a record of 14-3. In the event of a tie, U.P.E.I. would be awarded first place since they had beaten U.N.B. two out of three times during the past year. The Panthers had to win both games to earn the right to host the playoffs. Everything was in their own hands.

EASY VICTORIES

The first game was predicted to be an easy victory- St. Mary's had only two wins all year. But the Lady Panthers, taking nothing for granted, came out playing hard. Still, the pre-game predictions turned out to be quite accurate. The Panthers, with every player on the team involved in the scoring, walked away with an 80-52 win. The next day, however, the Acadia Axettes invaded the Sports Centre bringing with them a respectable 8-7 record, and would present the Panthers with a far greater challenge. But, the Panthers were too motivated to be impressed by Acadia and walked away with another easy victory- again with the bench playing a large role. With the final buzzer sounding, the Panthers clinched first place and the A.U.A.A. playoffs would come to the U.P.E.I. Sports Centre for the first time.

Last weekend basketball fans from all over packed every corner of the Sports Centre to get a glimpse of the Final Four- the finest women's basketball teams in Atlantic Canada. Participating in the tournament were the host team and first place finishers the U.P.E.I. Lady Panthers (14-3) who won ten out of their last eleven games to claim first place from the second place U.N.B. Red Bloomers (14-3). Finishing third and playing the Bloomers were the St. FX Lady Xaverians (12-5), and rounding out the participants and placing fourth were the Dalhousie