

Terry Jones Memorial Day

By Brad DEIGHAN

On Monday, February 17th at 3pm, the Indoor Sports Society will begin its Terry Jones Staircase Race Memorial Tournament (TJSRMT). Terry Jones is a former UPEI student whose staircase running abilities surpassed and amazed teammates and opponents alike for three consecutive years from 1999 until 2001. A respected athlete who worked extremely hard to get to the top, he was forever dedicated to overcoming new steps in turning his afternoon hobby into a career.

"Terry would always be there working on his cardiovascular fitness, even when the school closed. He was a dedicated athlete, you could even find him doing laps at the mall in his heavy work boots, running the wrong way on the escalators... it's so hard to find an athlete like Terry Jones," says Otto Strauss, head coach of the Canadian Staircase Runners' Association (CSRA).

Strauss met Terry here at UPEI in 1997 but never caught on to his natural abilities until 1998, when he was talking to Terry by the side of a pool one day.

"We were just sitting by the side of the pool talking, when I noticed his feet, and he had four ankles... and it just hit me! I said to him, 'Terry, did you ever consider a career in staircase racing?' And he said 'yeah', and that he'd actually been strengthening his ankles at the gym and doing a little experimenting with different styles of staircases - indoor 15, 20, and 30 inch concrete straights, flat-board roundabouts, semi-break levels, metal-alloy and wooden hollows, and even outdoor rough-terrain sandstone; 10, 20, and 25 inches. But it was with the 20 inch semi-break levels that he excelled, and trained hard on those staircases every single day, so you know... I thought I'd teach him the railings."

Strauss notes Terry's disdain for "lazy elevator types" and his unique ability to get to know the coarse terrain. "He had an amazing ability to understand and become one with the staircases he worked on, you could see that he really knew what he was doing on the stairs. He was really no fool when it came to staircases. Sometimes he'd be chatting it up, just sitting there, eating an apple with the stairs, you know."

"We had a class together in 1998 - a physics class. I remember we'd be talking about staircase physics and then when we'd come to the stairs on the way to class Terry would just be gone, I mean, I just

couldn't keep up, it was amazing! Sometimes I'd be on my way to class and Terry would just fly by me on the staircase and drag a fart and I'd get to breathe it in the rest of the way! He was a really great guy."

Then, sadly, at the height of a looming staircase career, Terry Jones fell out of the CSRA for good. During his most infamous run at his home-town track in the main building here at UPEI, Terry travelled up, then down the staircase in 24.01 seconds flat. This was a new record in staircasing for a UPEI student taking 19.83 seconds to reach the top, and a mere 5.18 seconds to reach the bottom. This accomplishment was never to be forgotten, nor

surpassed by any other athlete.

"If you look in the National Staircase Racing Rule Book, you'll see that rule (1)a) states that '... each runner must come into contact with each individual stair in order to qualify...' and so on, but it doesn't say anything about having to use your feet, and so really, you could use any part of your body. Terry Jones did that."

All athletes interested in participating in the Terry Jones Staircase Race Memorial Tournament are asked to fill out one of the sign-up sheet attached to the office door of The Cadre, being sure to include stair-track preference. There will be a number of races all over campus, beginning at 3:00 on February 30. Only

limited number of athletes will be accepted as any more than 15 people running down the same set of stairs at one particular time becomes dangerous.

Top qualifiers selected for this year's Memorial will be given a position on the UPEI Staircase Racing Team, and will also be invited to attend a presentation on the memory of Terry Jones. This presentation will be held at the AVC building, where his numerous ankles have undergone intense study and are now on display.

After months of studying, the ankles did not do well on their tests, which included demanding writing skills which they could not stand up to.

