

Men's Rugby

by James Scholb

Saturday, October 28, Field House Parking Lot, 7:55AM- The players are starting to mass. Questions about having enough cars, enough gas money and enough cars coming back from Fredericton are swirling in the cool, autumn morning breeze. Each of these players has paid up to \$80 for the right to represent their school in rugby. Further, each has paid an athletic fee on their tuition of roughly \$40.

The Athletic Department (AD) has been very cool toward giving the team varsity status. The only thing they have given them is \$500 for the season and have made it very clear that the team should be lucky to get that. So the players languish on as a club playing against well-funded varsity teams. Today, it will be a semi final game against perennial power University of New Brunswick Ironmen.

The field in Fredericton is brown and speckled with green patches of grass. The air is cold and the wind is blowing hard from the polluted Saint John River. Game time today is 2:30. The battered and bruised Panther First XV are playing without seven opening day starters and the rest of the team is hobbling around at best. But each member is prepared to let it all hang out this afternoon as they know they will have a full off season to recover.

The game starts out with a bang as both teams try to set a physical tone. UNB, who had trounced the Panthers two weeks earlier on the Red Rock, take a 5-0 lead about 15 minutes in. The try is hard earned and foreshadows the rest of the afternoon. At the half, the Ironmen lead 20-0.

The Ironmen continue to put up points in the second half. But with five minutes remaining,

the Panther squad rallies and begins driving the ball down the field. Excellent rucking is eventually rewarded when lock David Adams picks up the ball and runs around the side to score. Flanker and captain, Sean Younker, playing in his last game as a Panther, attempts the convert but misses amid good natured heckling from the Ironmen. The game and season ends for the Panthers with a 40-5 loss.

But the club has good potential. They came out flying at the beginning of the year but never really improved as a team and really felt the injuries as the season progressed. The club only fielded one team this year and lacked the depth a second side could provide. However, some 12 players played on the provincial under 21 team and three others played under 18's and this represents the future. A good nucleus now exists with only four players expected to leave. The future bodes well for the club. But it would be much brighter with a little more AD support and perhaps varsity status.



Prop Ian Richardson going for a steal while forwards and backs look on.

Women's Rugby

by James Scholb

Saturday, Oct. 27th, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The UPEI Women's Rugby First XV played St. Francis Xavier today for the right to represent the Atlantic Conference in the upcoming National CIAU Final, in Lennoxville, Quebec. The club lost a heartbreaker 23-0 to end their season and leave them short of their CIAU goal.

The Panthers played a strong game and were only down 8-0 at the half. The play swayed up and down the field but the Panthers were unable to penetrate the X-Women defence. The Panthers gave up two tries in the final five minutes as they were worn from an up-tempo level of play they were unused to from their own league, which they dominated. The final score was 23-0.

Three members of the club were selected to the Atlantic University Sport All Star team. They were flanker Shannon Gillis-Atkins, inside center Dawn Paynter, and fly half Jaclyn Coady. Also, Dale MacLeod was selected as Coach of the Year. Overall, an impressive season for the Ladies especially considering their non varsity status and little AD support.

As a matter of fact, the team approached the AD the week before their final game asking what support they would provide the team, representing the school, in the event they won the treasured birth. Athletic Director Barb Mullaly was quite clear that they should appreciate the \$500 they had already received and that no other funding would be available. Ruling out funding without even waiting to see if the team won is not the most supportive position she could have taken for one of her teams. I wonder if she would have taken the same position if it was the soccer or basketball team. I am fairly certain she would have sang a different tune.

But one can be fairly certain that President Wade MacLauchlan, in his continuing efforts to improve UPEI, would have found money for the club. The team had made arrangements to discuss this possibility with him. That issue is now mute. But MacLauchlan will be meeting with representatives of the club to discuss potential varsity status. Good luck with that and congratulations on a season the school can be proud of.

