

# No Stopping The Basketball Panthers

by Matthew Beardsley

With January at an end and February just underway, both the Men's and Ladies Panther Basketball teams are preparing for the stretch drive to the AUAA playoffs where they will be defending their titles that they won last year.

Currently both teams are undefeated in league play, the men at 9-0 and the women 6-0. One would have to surmise that based on these records the hoop squads would certainly be among the favorites to win their respective AUAA titles.

Both teams started the season with some adjustments to make as they both lost all-star players to graduation and other personal reasons.

The Lady Panthers after winning their second straight AUAA title and finishing fourth at the Nationals in Lethbridge, Alberta lost two all-stars. Guard Ria Bahadursingh and forward Tracy MacEachern.

Head Coach Dave MacNeill says you can't replace players like that but that you continue on and hope to do the best that you can.

One would have to say that he is doing a little bit better than that. buoyed by the return of 1985

Canadian Paula Edwards and the addition of two fine new rookies Kathy Quinn of Ch'Town Rural and Lori Knickle of Colonel Gray the Lady Panthers have carried on without missing a beat.

The Lady Panthers are 17-2 on the season, their only two losses coming at a Montreal tournament and the other in the final of a high performance tournament in McGill. That loss in McGill came to the defending

CIAU champions

Manitoba Bisons. The Bisons are also currently the number 1 ranked team in the country.

Among those 17 wins were two tournament titles, first the Dalhousie Centennial Women's Basketball Classic where they defeated the host Dal Tigers in the final. Then they hosted their own RODD-UPEI tournament where they once again met the Tigers in the final. The venue was different but the outcome was the same. Led by tournament MVP Paula Edwards the Lady Panthers ran their way to a hard fought 12 point win 64-52.

The very next weekend the same two teams played again and once again the Lady Panthers were victorious, 67-54. At that point in time it seemed the only thing that could slow down the Lady Panthers was an act of nature. As fate would have it that is exactly what happened.

The Lady Panthers were to play the U.N.B. Red Bloomers but the first major storm of the year prevented the team from leaving the island and extending their winning streak.

So after a long lay-off of more than two weeks the Lady Panthers were finally able to see some game action. The team travelled to Nova Scotia to play Saint Mary's and Acadia. The two week layoff was quite evident as they defeated SMU 64-40, a team they had beaten by 55 earlier this year.

They rebounded the next game however and defeated the Acadia Axettes 59-37, a tough scrappy team who played the Lady Panthers very close last year. The Lady Panthers defense was one of the big keys to the victory as they held the Axettes to just 7 points in the second half.

Stephanie Smith led the Lady Panthers with 12 points with Stephanie Knickle and Janet Nichols contributing 10 and 11 points respectively. Smith is also among the top ten in scoring in the AUAA averaging 15 points a game.

The Lady Panthers are at home this weekend for two games against the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Game times are Saturday at 6 pm and Sunday afternoon at 1.

The Men's Basketball team lost two players at the end of last year, point guard Delroy Adams who was voted team MVP and forward Steve Ruiz who was an AUAA all-star last year.

The team received a big boost when forward Curtis Brown came back to fulfill his final year of eligibility. Head Coach George Morrison expected Brown to pick up the slack from Ruiz's departure and he has done just that.

Brown has been instrumental in the Panthers great start and is third in the league scoring at 19.8 points per game, just ahead of teammate Peter Gordon who is averaging 19.7 points per game.

Many other Panthers are among the league leaders in various categories. Rookie Dennis Smith is 4th in shooting % at

58.0. 3 Panthers are at the top of the free throw category. Peter Gordon leads the league at 90.7%. Mark Roberts is right behind at 87.5% and Dave Dunn is 5th at 82.8.

Mark Roberts is 4th in the league in rebounds averaging 7.6 boards a game.

Last week the Panthers returned home after a long spell on the road where they participated in two tournaments at York and Dalhousie and games against U.N.B., Mount A, Acadia, and S.M.U.

At the York tournament the Panthers upset the #1 team in the country the Brandon Bobcats who are also the defending CIAU champions. The Panthers advanced to the final where they lost in overtime on a last second shot to the University of British Columbia.

From there they travelled back home to play in the Dalhousie Coca-Cola tournament. In their first game they were matched up against St. Francis of New York a division 1-A team in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). The Panthers stayed close for all of the game before finally losing in the final minutes.

The Panthers advanced to the consolation final by defeating Saint Mary's. In the final against Dalhousie the Panthers blew a 20 point lead in the second half as the Tigers simply appeared to want to win the game more. However being on the road for that long certainly must have affected the team.

Curtis Brown was named to the tournament all-star team for his great all-round play.

The following weekend the Panthers had a big road trip that would take them through Acadia and Saint Mary's. In the game against Acadia, the Panthers arch rivals, UPEI led for all the game and won a very huge contest 69-60.

Acadia had been ranked #4 in the country and on the basis of that defeat they fell to #8 while the Panthers rose to #5 in the country.

The Panthers were more than relieved to return to the friendly confines of Alumni Gym as they played the Hawks of Mount Allison in a rare Tuesday night game, and than in a big clash against the Tigers of Dalhousie.

Against Mount A, Mark Roberts came off the bench to score 20 points. Roberts was 5-5 from the field including many off balance lean in layups. Roberts was also a perfect 10-10 from the foul line. Peter Gordon was the Coca-Cola player of the game as he scored 25 points.

Friday's game was expected to be a thriller and no one was disappointed. The biggest crowd of the year filled Alumni Gym to the rafters in anticipation of a high scoring, fast paced contest.

The Panthers bolted out of the gate and led by some hot shooting from Dave Dunn, Peter Gordon and Curtis Brown jumped out to a 56-32 halftime lead.

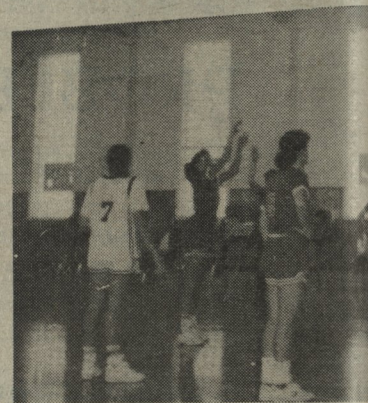
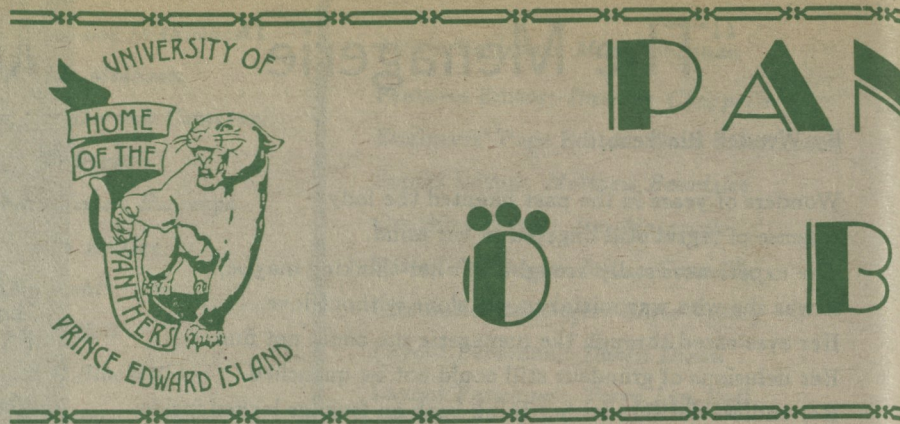
As was the case in their last game Dal refused to fold and came out smoking in the second half.

Led by Willem Verbeek the Tigers narrowed the gap to 10 points and were closing fast. Just as it appeared the Tigers were about to cut the lead even closer Mark Roberts stole the ball, spun around a defender and layed the ball in for a huge basket.

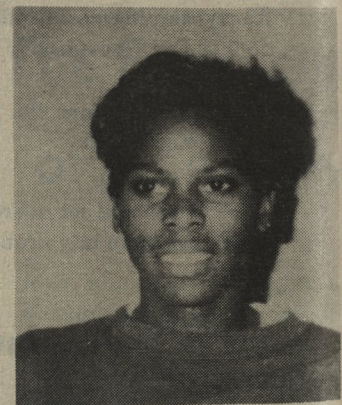
That basket brought the crowd to life and Dal was never in the game from there. They made a few runs after that but all were repelled by the Panthers. For his great work at both ends of the court Mark Roberts was voted the Coca-Cola player of the game.

The Panthers front-court had an amazing game. Dave Dunn had 21, Peter Gordon 24, and Mark Roberts 23. Alonzo Wright chipped in with 15 points, 12 of those from 3 point land.

The Panthers travel to Nova Scotia again this weekend for games against Dalhousie and St.F.X. A good weekend would go a long way to helping the Panthers secure top spot in the AUAA.



Lady Panther Lori Knickle launches the St. Mary's Belles in exhi



Paula Edwards  
1985 All-Canadian

