

# Lakehead Heckler's Row holds tryouts

by Elliot King (CUP)

Lakehead University's most subversive institution is back for its sixth year of constructive chaos and maniacal devotion to LU basketball.

Heckler's Row is the seething volume of opinions, cutting wit, game commentary and Lakehead boosterism that erupts from behind the opposing team's bench during varsity basketball games.

Since 1995, "the Row" has been a key part of the unparalleled Thunderdome experience that has more in common with the displays of fan support at American college basketball games than Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) conference games.

This year is poised to be the best ever in the Row's exciting history, with the prospect of full-scale tryouts expected to bring new blood, energy and invective to the group.

Last year's interview and audition process for new recruits has been replaced with a true-to-life game situation — real varsity players, a certified referee, and inimitable basketball action — with emphasis on the quality, tone, and volume of heckling from Row hopefuls.

What kind of person are they looking for? Original Row member Mike Lyons lists the following attributes: "First and foremost, we want Lakehead basketball fans; people with basketball

knowledge, people with a sense of humour, people with moxie, and people with an instinct for getting under the skin of opposing team players, trainers and coaches."

All of these qualities are important, and people who have an

## They're Lakehead and they're proud

abundance of one can use that to overcome shortcomings in others, continues Lyons.

Since its inception, Heckler's Row has been an integral part of Lakehead basketball. It began as a group of first year students attending a basketball game and starting a running commentary with Gogebic Community College star Carlos Barnes.

During the game, Barnes fell into the trap set by the hecklers by trying to win them over instead of concentrating on the game and his teammates. Barnes ended the game with two missed free throws as his team lost the game by a single point.

Having realized what kind of an effect heckling, mind games, and the encouragement of divisiveness can have on an opposing team in a close game, Heckler's Row was born, and hasn't missed a game since.

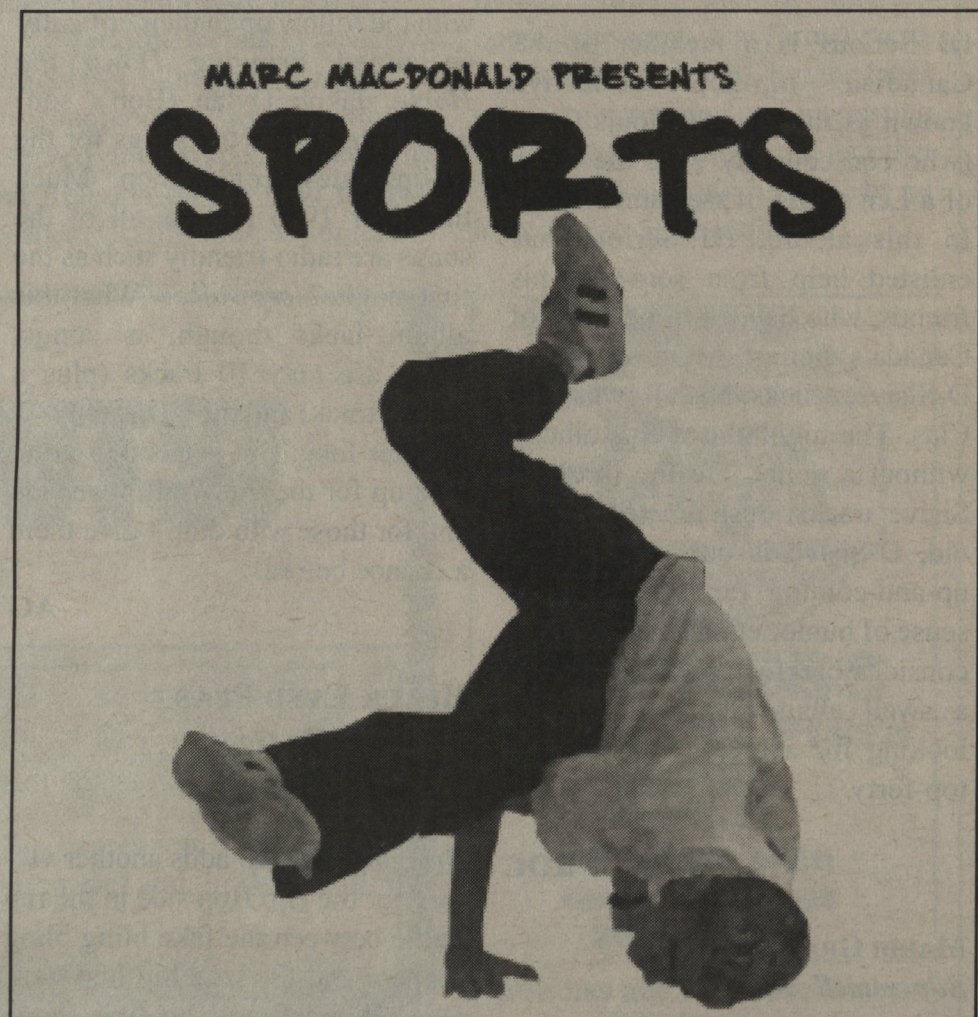
Last year, a piece on CBC Radio about Heckler's Row generated national interest. The Row is known, respected, and feared by basketball teams all over Ontario and the mid-west United States.

Despite the occasional controversy over its methods, the members of Heckler's Row remain adamant that they do it all for the love of the game, and out of support for the Lakehead Thunderwolves. Row statistician Mike Johnston downplays the negative image that is sometimes pro-

jected onto the Row.

"What people don't understand is how much the opposing teams thrive on the attention, and consider it an extra challenge and bonus to playing in the Thunderdome," he says.

Row member Eric McGoeys agrees: "After the game, the players invariably congratulate us, compliment us on our best zingers, and tell us that they regret not having fans like us at their home games."



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