

The easiest way to garner more support from the community, however, lies in producing a winning program. Let's be honest here. Sports fans in PEI, and Charlottetown in particular, really don't have that much choice when it comes to live sports action. Apart from the Charlottetown Abbies, a well-established and relatively successful junior hockey team, UPEI sports make up the highest level of competitive sports here on PEI. Of course the fans are going to come out and watch. What else can they do? Imagine how many more fans would attend if the teams they cheer for were actually competitive within their league

Of course it's not that simple: successful programs have to be built over many years. Quality student/athletes must be recruited to provide the foundation for success. Oddly, our athletic department seems intent on actually deconstructing what was once a proud athletic program. How else can one explain the lack of competitive success which has plagued our school in the recent past? You want Panther pride? It's not as simple as coming out and cheering the teams on. Quite simply, people want to cheer winners.

Each respective sports team has a fairly solid base of dedicated fans who turn out year after year to watch the teams play. Suffice it to say that the fan base could be strengthened if there were actually winning teams.

The blame has to be levelled somewhere. I'm being very polite when I say this. I just want to see our teams win. How come our athletic department doesn't want that? Or do they? If so, they certainly go about it in a strange way.

Perhaps our university coaches are partly to blame. Let's look at the women's basketball team. After making it all the way to

the conference championship one year ago, the team slipped all the way to last place in their division. Why? They only lost one player from their team of a year ago. Does losing one player really amount to such a drastic decline in productivity?

I've been to a number of basketball (both men's and women's) and hockey games. There is considerable talent on all teams. Perhaps not quite enough top-notch talent to bring a conference title to our school yet, but definitely enough to produce play-off calibre teams. Yet not one of these teams, be it basketball, hockey, or volleyball, displays any consistency. They play well together in spurts but eventually lapse back into mediocrity. It is up to the coaches to develop team unity. A successful team is a well-oiled machine. All its parts work together to achieve success. Coaches are expected to help their players gel so that they may be able to triumph over their competition. Is a lack of proper coaching techniques contributing to the winter sports woes here at UPEI? It would certainly appear so.

Now, let's look at the athletes. What is their motivation for being part of the UPEI Panthers? Is it to achieve success in competition while receiving an education? Is it to boost their social status here on campus? There's one thing I know: Every athlete who performs on a relatively high level of competition should be absolutely scared to death of losing. One cannot accept mediocrity if one plans on achieving success in the athletic forum. Athletes who fail to realize this fact compete for the wrong reason. Want to have fun? Go play intramurals. Want to achieve success and instill pride in your school's athletic program? Then play to win. All the time.

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