

Jack of all trades

The many hats of Bruce Norton

By Scott MacDonald

TO PLAY SPORTS ON THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL TAKES great athletic ability, coupled with determination and a desire to be your best.

Officiating sports at the university level requires a keen eye, a thorough knowledge of the game and a great amount of impartiality.

Coaching university athletics means that the individual must have both wisdom for the game and an ability to deal with athletes. That person must be able to shape a team, and deal with their collective psyches.

Bruce Norton has done all three.

do it. There was no one around at the time, so I was asked to officiate. Being a college student, I certainly could use the cash. I've been officiating for the past twenty years."

Coaching, though, is where Bruce Norton has made his mark. He was Panther assistant coach in 1988 and 1989, took over head coaching duties during the 1990 season when Art Cameron took a leave of absence. Norton took that Panther team to the AUAA playoffs; after they sat out of the previous year's postseason.

"Dave Snowie, my assistant coach, and I often look back at that year. We had a good team, and I believe that with a few breaks, we could have won the whole thing. With



Norton, who finished up his second year of coaching soccer at the University of Prince Edward Island, is an exceptional individual. The 39-year-old junior high teacher has been involved with soccer at UPEI for the past twenty years in a variety of roles.

He began his university athletic career as an offensive lineman for UPEI's football team. Bruce was no stranger to soccer however, as he played in junior and senior high. In his senior year of high school, he realized the role soccer could have in his life.

"I saw soccer could be a good future. You can play football on the varsity level for four years, but where can you play after that? I saw a lot of places to play soccer after my university life was over."

Norton played a year and a half of soccer for the Panthers, playing all over the field; from goalie to striker and everywhere in between. In fact, he was an instrumental part of their first win in the AUAA. "I played goal against UNB. Vince (head coach, Vince Mulligan) picked me up for the weekend to play. We beat them 3-2 to get the first win ever for UPEI. It was our third year in the league. It was pretty memorable."

Norton graduated from UPEI in 1977 with a BA, and then returned to acquire his BEd. in 1981. During his university years, he made the transition from player to referee as he began officiating. Soccer was not as popular as it is today, so there were few qualified officials on PEI.

"It came down to the fact that they needed someone to

current team, that's the standard that we are striving to achieve. We want to get back to that level."

Norton has won provincial titles at the junior and senior highschool levels, and was the head coach for PEI at the 1985 and 1989 Canada Games.

For Norton, coaching boils down to the bottom line: wins and losses. "A coach is responsible for everyone on the team. When you are in a game, you have to move players to the situation. It is all winning and losing. That's the only way you can gauge success."

Since Norton plays soccer in various leagues year round, he feels that it helps create a better relationship with his players. "Certainly, it's nice for players to see their coach play. Contact, either as a ref or player, helps you to develop a rapport with your players."

Norton's various duties have allowed him to gain multiple perspectives on the diverse roles in sports. "As a referee, you are responsible to be a judge of rules, and are expected to have a lot of common sense. Playing is what all sports are about. Coaching is where the individual has the most fun and enjoyment. Coaching requires you to develop and provide guidance, and a sense of good team play."

As Norton heads into his third year as head coach, he has two main goals: to see his current squad improve, and to make it into the AUAA playoffs. For a man who has accomplished so much, it would seem foolish to bet against him.

Bruce Norton is located front row centre in the photo.

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